



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

Vol. 41, No. 1

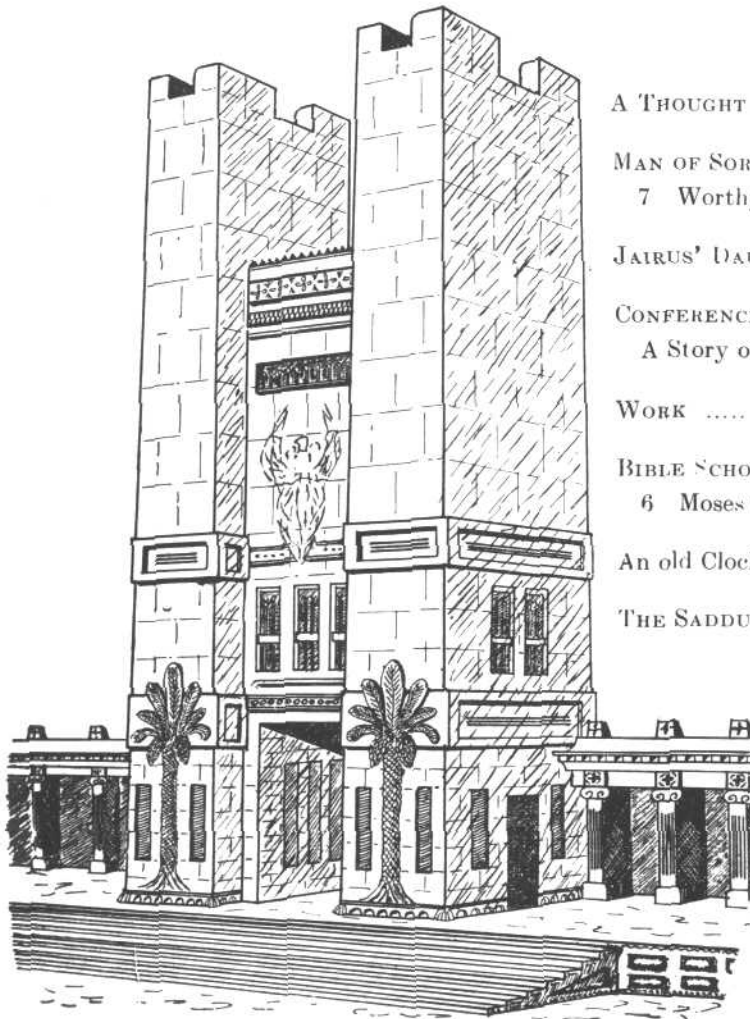
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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## Bible Study Monthly

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### A Thought for the Month

*"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee"* (Job. 42. 5).

The climax to that drama which is the Book of Job comes at this verse. All the arguments and debates, all the wisdom and knowledge, displayed by Job's three philosopher friends, had contributed nothing to his understanding of God. It was experience, the effect of all that life brought him of good and evil, prosperity and suffering, happiness and heartbreak, which enabled him at last to see God. His bitter comment upon the philosophy of suffering as expounded by the three *"I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are ye all"* is matched only by the scornful, peremptory demand of the Almighty *"Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?"* Job started out in life believing in God and the overruling benevolence of God; what he got in return was an overwhelming succession of disasters which led him at last passionately to exclaim *"O that thou would'st hide me in the grave"*. But at the end he was able to say what perhaps very few men in any age have been able to say; *"Now mine eye seeth thee"*. His belief held firm because he knew—and the whole tenor of the Book of Job reveals this as its outstanding thesis—that God is working to a purpose which involves progress and development through discipline and endurance, a purpose of a nature which transcends the events and time-span of this earthly life, so that whatever may be the apparent evidence to the contrary it is true of God with respect to every man that *"He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold"* (Job. 23. 10).

There are so many to-day who look at their Christian background in the light of what they know of modern science and the wisdom of this world, find the two apparently irreconcilable, and jettison their faith in conse-

quence. Because God cannot be defined in terms of the measurements used to define things of daily experience they decide God does not exist. Because they have never heard in modern times of One coming from another world to live among men for a spell and return whence He came, they declare such a happening is impossible. Because the existence of such other world, asserted in the Christian Scriptures, cannot be demonstrated by telescope, radio or mathematical calculation they refuse to believe in the possibility. And this in an age when every incredible wonder becomes commonplace within a few years of its invention or discovery. Of all ages in the world's history this present one with all its discoveries from the formerly unknown should surely be the one in which men could be expected the most readily to admit not only the possibility but even the probability of a sphere of life and power still unperceived by any means the natural man has at his command

The position is more tragic when the man who thus announces his loss of faith is one who to that point has stood before his fellows as a minister of the Gospel. There have been a number of such cases in recent times. The fact that the stand is usually an honest and sincere one does not minimise its tragedy. *"We do not know what God is; Jesus was a good man but only a man; Resurrection? Impossible!"* Contrast the calm confidence of the Apostle Paul at the end of a long life of arduous experience. *"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded"*; that of the ancient patriarch *"Now mine eye seeth thee"*. Is there not a real likelihood that such assurance is positive knowledge due to an actual attunement with that other world, that such men may have bridged the gap which no manmade detecting instrument and no philosophical investigation can ever bridge?

## MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in  
Isaiah 53

### Part 7. Worthy is the Lamb

*"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities" (vs. 11).*

When the Creator of all things stood and viewed all that He had made, He pronounced it "very good". That was at the close of the primary work of creation, when man had been given life and introduced to his Edenic home, but before experience of evil began to have its effect on the moulding of human character to the ideal which God set in the beginning. Even that incomplete work was considered "very good" by the Lord of All. By how much more, therefore, shall our Lord be satisfied when he beholds the glorious consummation of his redemptive work! The tremendous forces of material things, working together over vast spans of time, brought this universe of ours to the point where our earth was born. After further long ages, whilst angels looked on, this planet became fitted for human habitation. The morning stars had sung together, and all the sons of God had shouted for joy. Man lived, and rejoiced for a brief spell in the innocence and happiness of Eden. Then came sin, and the orderly progress of Divine creative power was rudely interrupted. Death reigned over mankind; no longer was man lord of the lower creation, having dominion over the beasts of the field and the fowl of the air and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. And God was not satisfied.

That is a most important principle. God, who had looked upon his creation in the days of Adam's sinlessness and perfection, and found it satisfactory, after the Fall was not satisfied. He did not intend to leave matters where they were. Then and there He put into operation the great Plan of redemption of which Jesus is the central figure. The serpent was to bruise the heel of the seed; but the seed was to bruise the head of the serpent—to destroy it. That was the promise given in Eden, and although many long years were to roll by before there was any outward evidence of a Divine moving to the fulfilment of the promise, still God was not indifferent. In the fulness of time the work of deliverance began.

Here in Isa. 53 that work has ended. The Deliverer looks back upon the dark and tragic

story of the past, and views the glorious consummation in the reconciliation of "whosoever will" to the Father. All that mankind has achieved during the thousand year day of trial that we call the Millennial Age has been in consequence of the "travail of his soul". All that ascends to God in praise and worship from the multitudes of redeemed humanity is the direct result of the "travail of his soul". The happiness and the loyalty of all mankind, the beauty and the glory of the restored and everlasting earth, the peace and harmony of a whole creation ordering its course exactly as God desires it shall be ordered, all has come about because of the "travail of his soul". So when our blessed Redeemer looks upon the human creation made perfect through belief in him and willing acceptance of his sacrifice on their behalf, He will be satisfied. As He enters into communion with the glorified body of saints who are called his Church, "changed" to be like him and to be with him where He is, He will be satisfied. All these wondrous fruits of the Divine Plan will be sources of satisfaction to the One who suffered and died for us that we might live for ever with him.

The fact that our Lord will only be satisfied by such a sequel to his life and death on earth is only one of the evidences we have in the Scriptures that the Plan of God is going to be a glorious success insofar as the number of the saved is concerned. In the old days it used to be thought that only the very few would be saved; the great majority were doomed to rejection and eternal banishment to hell. To-day we view matters differently. We know that God would have all men saved and is putting forth every possible inducement to effect that end. If any man is rejected at the last it will only be because he has deliberately and of set intent wilfully resisted every good influence God can bring to bear upon him, and he is determined to continue in his sin. Every indication is that there will not be more than a comparative few of such.

How has this wonderful sequel to the Divine Plan, the reconciliation of all who will, been effected? It is by the knowledge possessed by our Lord. Knowledge of God, gained by his presence with the Father "before the world was", when He was as the Father's

right hand, rejoicing always before him. Knowledge of man, gained during his earthly life when He was made like man that He might share with men in all their infirmities and sorrows, and be made a merciful and faithful High Priest able to have compassion upon the ignorant and them that are out of the way. Knowledge of the Devil and his wiles, gained both from the times before the fall of Lucifer, when he was a sinless creature in the high courts of Heaven, and in the time when he bore the grim title of prince of this world. It was because of this knowledge that our Lord was able to carry out his mission with inflexible determination and assurance of ultimate triumph. He, the Lord of glory, was of necessity possessed of all knowledge; that is why his personality is presented under the name of "Wisdom" in the early chapters of the Book of Proverbs. In later days the "Wisdom" of early Jewish thought became the "Logos" or word, thought, mind, of God. The "Logos" in turn became identified with the Man of Nazareth when John, speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, told his listeners that the "Logos" had been made flesh so that the invisible and incomprehensible Son of God might be manifest amongst them and to them. So the One who lived among men, ministering to them, taught them, suffered with them and ultimately suffered for them, being put to death upon the Cross, was himself the repository of all Divine wisdom and knowledge, the very Logos of God. Thus it was that by his knowledge the One we love and serve justified many.

*"For he shall bear their iniquities."* "When" he shall bear their iniquities, is the right thought. It is when Jesus has borne the iniquities of the children of men and given himself a Ransom for all, that the basis for justification is laid down. Even then men are not automatically justified, for there is man's part in this matter as well as that of God. No man can be justified by faith until he has exercised faith and become conscious of faith in Jesus Christ. No man can enjoy the state of reconciliation with God which is the state of justification by faith until he has first accepted Jesus as his Saviour and trusted in him as the basis of his acceptance before God. And no man can attain that state without repentance—repentance for the sin of the past, repentance for his own share in the undone state of the world, repentance for all that he is that is out of accord with the Divine ideal. And not very many do thus repent in this Age. Even though God has ever

since Pentecost extended to all men a call—nay, a command—to repentance, few of earth's millions have as yet heard the call and still fewer have heeded it. And meantime the world goes on in its sin and the Redeemer still bears its iniquities, and must do so, until at length those iniquities are for ever removed by the cleansing measures of the Millennial Kingdom. In that day it may truly be said that the righteous servant has justified many, that the Plan of salvation has reached its glorious climax and the fruits of that two-thousand-year-old manifestation of the Divine Lord in human form "for the suffering of death" has "justified many".

*"Therefore will I appoint him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors"* (vs. 12).

This final verse is something like the "Hallelujah Chorus" in Handel's "Messiah". It is the acclamation of triumph that ends the story. This glorious climax was inevitable from the first; there was no doubt at all of its coming, but none the less it resounds with notes of joy and gladness which could not have been struck before. This is the Father setting the seal of his own satisfaction upon all that has been done. The first two clauses of this verse constitute a picture of a victorious warrior returning from the battle to receive honour and reward from his King. The Lord Jesus Christ is the warrior and he has vanquished death and all its powers and driven sin and evil far away so that they can never return. There are many captives and trophies of the battle; all those things which in any way have opposed the righteousness of God or have flouted his laws or have ravaged his dominion have been subdued and led captive by the conquering Christ. All enemies have been put under his feet. But since He also is to be subject unto God Who did put all things under him, that God may be all in all, it is an entirely appropriate picture here that shows him bringing the trophies and spoils of victory to God his Father, as it were, and receiving back from his Father's hands the honour that is rightfully his. We know what that honour is; in the name of Jesus shall every knee bow, both in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. So when the Father is depicted as declaring "I will appoint him a portion with the great,

and he shall divide the spoil with the strong" He implies that He himself is the great and the strong one to whom has been rendered the spoils of war and who divides those spoils with the Son, who is the victor in the conflict. In no better manner could we have had shown to us the unity which exists between the Father and the Son in the final triumph over evil. The whole Plan of Redemption is of the Father; its execution is by the Son. The power which overthrows evil is of the Father; that power is wielded by the Son. During the long period while sin subsisted upon the earth but as yet the time for the work of atonement had not come, Father and Son co-existed in the heavens, working in complete unity and oneness of thought and purpose. When in due time Christ Jesus was "born into the world to save sinners" the Father in heaven, dwelling in the indescribable light which no man can approach unto, and the Son on earth, made in the form of a bondman, manifest to men in the likeness of humanity, remained still in the intimacy of unfettered communion and the harmony of perfect unity. When the time of sacrifice and suffering was ended and the way prepared for men to walk the highway back to God, the risen Christ ascended to perfect reunion with his Father, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. In all of this the relationship of the Son to the Father is clearly shown; and now in the end of all things the Son receives from the Father excellent honour and glory. God the Father has appointed him a portion with himself the great; He has graciously given that the Son shall divide the spoil with himself the strong, and so the heavenly chorus goes up in jubilation "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive riches, and power, and honour, and glory, and blessing*".

Because He poured out his life unto death—that is why. For three-and-a-half years He faithfully carried out his earthly commission

and the whole of that ministry was a pouring out of his life unto death. Jesus not only died for men; He also lived for them, and that living was in itself a dying, for He died daily, giving and being given, spending and being spent, yielding to all who would partake, his flesh which was to be for the life of the world.

Because He was numbered with the transgressors—that is why. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich. That becoming poor involved his being counted among the transgressors—He who knew no sin. It involved his being condemned as a criminal—He who knew no guile, neither was deceit found in his mouth. He the holy, the sinless one, was put to death as an offender against the holy laws of God, and counted among the criminals of this world. In bearing away the sins of mankind He was himself accounted a sinner. But that is the final note of triumph. By this very means He made intercession for the condemned and dying race before the Throne of God, and established his plea. The fallen sons of men, despairing and dying in the darkness, without hope and without God in the world, all unwittingly saw a great light. Adam's children, sitting unheeding in the land of the shadow of death, found the light streaming upon them. The Light of the world shone at length into their hearts, transforming the fear and gloom and terror into peace and joy and love. The all-powerful wisdom of God had found a way—the only way—whereby the creation of his hands could achieve its fore-ordained destiny despite the invasion of sin. The holy Son of God, looking down from his exalted station in the heavens "shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied", and from all the earth shall arise the joyful chorus "*Lo, this is our God . . . we have waited for him . . . we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation*".

(THE END)

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## JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

A Comment

A note on Mark 5. 39 in the issue for last June suggested that the use of *katheudo* for "sleepeth" could indicate that the customary impression that Jesus raised the child from the dead might not be correct; more likely she was in a trance or a coma from which the Lord awakened her, admittedly as an exercise of Divine power—a miracle. A reader, commenting on this, points out that Luke—a

physician—says (Luke 8. 52-55) that "*her spirit (pneuma—breath) came again*" and records the expression "*knowing that she was dead*" (*apothnesko*—literal death). From this it could be argued that in fact the maid had died immediately before Jesus arrived and was in a condition analogous to modern cases which have died in the medical sense and have been revived by the "kiss of life" and

similar methods.

This might very well be a correct reconstruction of the incident; it is impossible to be dogmatic, for the vagaries of successive copyings and translations from the original manuscript tend to blur and distort details from which closer accuracy could be attained. The point of the original note was the apparent stress placed by Jesus on the assurance "she is not dead (apothnesko) but sleepeth" (*katheudo*). This phrase is preserved in exactly the same wording in all three gospels, indicating that it was for some reason or other a well-remembered declaration. It is evident that Jesus intended something different from the parallel case of Lazarus, of whom He said "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth" (*koimaomai*, used either of sleep or of death in its aspect of a sleep because ended by a resurrection) but when his disciples took him literally "then said he to them plainly, Lazarus is dead" (*apothnesko*—Jno. 11. 11-14). He declared definitely that Lazarus was dead and equally definitely that the maid was not. Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days and corruption had set in (Jno. 11. 39). The miracle on that occasion involved the reconstruction or recreation of living organic matter in addition to infusing the spirit or breath of life—almost completely analogous to the Genesis account of the creation of Adam. In the case of the maid it would seem that whether trance, coma or "medical death" the practical effect was the same. It might have been a coma that would eventually have ended in death; it might be that, medically speaking, modern forms of artificial respiration would have restored her to consciousness anyway. In point of fact it was the power exercised by Jesus which caused the vital organs, presumably as yet undamaged, to resume their functions. It must be remembered that logically the disease, whatever it was, from which the child suffered to cause this result, was cured at the same time, so there can be no doubt that we have here to do with a miracle.

The expression "knowing that she was dead" has little weight either way. "Knowing" is *oidia*, from *eidon*, a derivative of *horao*, and means knowing only in the sense of perceiving or seeing for oneself. Positive and accurate knowledge is rather indicated by *ginosko*, which is a different word altogether. The bystanders "laughed him to scorn, perceiving that she was dead"—in face of what was to them the apparent fact, but their knowledge was based only on the out-

ward appearance; Jesus did not himself endorse their impression and in fact in so many words contradicted it.

When all is said and done it remains that Jesus used two directly opposite expressions in respect of this girl and of Lazarus. Of one He said "She is not dead"; of the other "Lazarus is dead". Perhaps the real point lies in the shade of meaning inherent in the word here rendered "dead", a meaning which does not come out in English. *Apothnesko* is derived from roots which include the idea of complete cutting off or separation, of "dying out", of corruption or rotting away, as though it indicates death indeed with no possibility of recovery from the standpoint of human knowledge. The dying out or rotting away of a wheat grain in the ground before giving rise to new life, and the state of a withered tree in which life has become extinct and the wood rots away, are instances in the New Testament where this word is employed. The condition of Lazarus in whom the dissolving processes had already begun was correctly described by the word; that of the child, whether in coma or true death, because the state was so recent and corruption had not begun, was not so described. Hence Jesus, mindful also, perhaps, of the grief of the parents, could justly use the softer word *katheudo*, sleep, knowing that at once He was going to raise her from that sleep, and so in the combination of the two incidents leave a demonstration for after times that whether the physical body remained intact or not, whether the mortal frame had or had not "returned to its earth", Divine power is equal to the occasion and can bring about restoration. The basis of the Christian faith is that the future life, the life of the ages, can come only by means of a resurrection from the dead. In these stories is enshrined the guarantee that Divine power can and will achieve that resurrection.

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#### Gone from us

Bro. G. Kearney (Belfast)  
 Sis. A. E. Melville (Ulverston)  
 Sis. F. W. Petran (Appleton, U.S.A.)  
 Bro. A. Taylor (Shotton)

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"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away"

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## CONFERENCE AT JERUSALEM

No. 8 in a series of  
stories of St. Paul

Fourteen years after his conversion St. Paul found himself in the middle of a major doctrinal squabble. Ten of those years had been spent in a fruitful and satisfying ministry in the Church at Antioch, the most important and influential Christian community after the original church at Jerusalem. In company with his brother minister, Barnabas, he had undertaken one journey—a charitable one, bearing a gift of money—to the Jerusalem church and one missionary journey into Asia. The rest of the time he had spent at Antioch, building up the faith of the believers in co-operation with his fellow elders. During all this time his principal theme was salvation through justification by faith in Christ. Acts 13, 39 records his stirring declaration in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, “*by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*”. That was the keynote of St. Paul’s early preaching. Later on he was to deal with every aspect of Christian theology, with dispensational expectations and with prophecy, with the Second Coming and the Messianic Kingdom, and what he had to say has immeasurably enriched our Christian heritage, but at this time he dwelt upon one main theme, justification by faith. It was not without reason that he stressed this foundation truth. St. Paul realised, what so many even in our own day fail to realise, that the Divine insistence upon faith and belief in Christ as an essential to salvation is based upon a profound law, the law which decrees that life can flow to man only from God and only through Christ. That all life originates in God and can only be lastingly sustained by God is a self-evident truth to every believer in God. Because the Son is the essential channel through which the Father is manifested to man He is also the only channel by which the life which is of God can come to man. So it is literally true that “*he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son shall not see life*”. The Apostle must have contrasted this understanding with his former belief that life could be gained by adherence to the law of Moses; “*the man that doeth these things shall live by them*”. The law promised life to the man who could keep its provisions inviolate, but no man ever succeeded in doing so, for all men without

exception are born imperfect, subject to Adamic frailty, and unable from the start to stand upright and righteous in the sight of God. Or all the Apostles St. Paul was probably the first to grasp the meaning of the Parable of the Prodigal Son and to realise that in the Divine arrangement it only needs the man to come before God in frank disavowal of his former shortcomings and failures and unbelief, and open his heart and mind without reserve to God, outreaching toward Him in Christ, for the channel to be opened and life to flow into him and make him a justified and reconciled child of God.

It must have been with a sense of shock therefore when one day Paul found visitors from Jerusalem assembled with the brethren at Antioch promulgating the old doctrine of salvation through the Mosaic law. These Judaistic Christians would, if they had their way, shackle the new virile faith of Christ with the old bonds of Judaism and virtually compel all Gentile converts to become Jews. They were quite definite about it too. “*Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved*”. (Acts 15, 1). Circumcision was the outward sign of the covenant made at Sinai between God and Israel and it bound the one who bore it to a life of ritual observance and scrupulous adherence to a set of rigid rules which left little room for that free expansion of the spirit, that wide exercise of individual judgment, which is the privilege and the hallmark of true Christianity. This was a direct challenge to the Pauline message of salvation through faith in Christ alone; it was immediately obvious that one or the other must give way, and so in a moment the first great doctrinal controversy of the Age was thrust upon the Church.

The brethren of the Church at Antioch, many of them Gentile converts, very evidently held their fellows at Jerusalem in high esteem and respect. That is not surprising. The Jerusalem Church was the senior, established at Pentecost some eighteen years previously, numerous and influential, including many of the priests and Pharisees, headquarters of the Apostles and those who had known Christ in the flesh, but it was almost exclusively Jewish in composition and outlook. Antioch was not more than ten years old, much more cosmopolitan in character,

but conscious that it owed its inception and early growth to Jerusalem. This open conflict of teaching between the centre they had such cause to honour and respect and their own much loved teachers Barnabas and Paul, and doubtless their elders, Simeon, Lucius and Manaen, must therefore have been a puzzling and distressing thing. The brevity of Acts 15. 2 probably veils a succession of tense church sessions at which the protagonists of the opposing views advanced their arguments and theses, each claiming Scriptural authority and the reported sayings of Jesus for the stand taken, each seeking to carry the assembled Church with their own point of view.

This Church at Antioch, for all its relative youth as a Christian community, seems to have been a singularly well-balanced and far-sighted congregation of believers. Every reference to its activities in the Book of Acts gives the impression of a sober, zealous and harmonious company, possessing a clear outlook on the verities of the faith. Perhaps the mixture of Jews and Gentiles and the fact they were citizens of one of the world's principal cities tended to discourage extremes of thought and practice in their midst. At any rate, the decision to which they eventually came was one worthy of a Church over which men like Barnabas and Paul presided. They determined that a commission of their leading ministers should go to Jerusalem and consult with the Apostles and elders of the Jerusalem Church about this question.

One does not realise at first how deep a spirit of wisdom and love dictated this move. It meant that Antioch, whilst not for one moment yielding her own right as an independent Christian Church to decide her own matters of faith and practice, acknowledged her obligation to maintain harmony with her Jerusalem counterpart by entering into discussion on the matter. There was no slight or slur cast upon those of the twelve Apostles of Christ who were still at Jerusalem; they were to be consulted and their views taken into full account. When it came to choosing the personnel of the commission, Barnabas and Paul at least were a foregone conclusion. From Galatians 2, which refers to this same visit, it seems that Titus, a pure-blooded Greek, was one of the party and there were one or two more whose names are not given. They travelled by land through Phoenicia, the ancient Phoenicia, and Samaria, calling upon local churches on the way—this was all Gentile territory and many of those whom they met must have been non-Jews—declar-

ing their own convictions as they went to the joy and satisfaction of their hearers. So, at last, they came to Jerusalem.

This was Paul's third visit since his conversion. He must have approached the city with mixed feelings, yet with a secret joy. On the first occasion he arrived a fugitive from Damascus and no one wanted anything to do with him. In the end he had to be smuggled out again and hurried out of the country before his enemies could get at him. The second time he came bringing a gift of money from the Antioch Church for the benefit of the poverty-stricken believers in the approaching famine. Now he was coming to contend for the principles of the faith with the leaders of the Church. He must have known what an important occasion this would prove to be. The forces working to make Christianity merely one more sect, even though a progressive sect, of the Jewish religion were by no means to be despised. Here in Jerusalem and in all the country round about the Christians had been brought up from birth under the ritual and the obligations of the Mosaic Law; it was hardly to be expected that they could abandon in a moment their ingrained belief that the blessing and favour of God was indissolubly tied up with the observance of that Law. After all, they might have reasoned, these are the royal laws of God; they must be as good for Gentiles as for us. The faith of Christ must involve obligations of some kind; believers must be different in some way from the pagans and the unbelievers around. What better distinction could there be than this system of laws and observances which had kept Israel apart from the nations as a people dedicated to God for fourteen hundred years past? This kind of reasoning could have had a strong appeal and it required the mind of a man like Paul to discern its fallacy. The whole future of his work as an ambassador of Christ to the Gentiles, if it was to be continued with the approval and endorsement of the Church, was bound up with the result of this conference.

The first session was apparently in the assembly of the entire church. Before them, and in the presence of the Apostles and elders, both Paul and Barnabas recounted all that they had done among the peoples of Asia, the converts which had been gained, and the churches that had been established. Without doubt Paul expounded his own understanding of the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ and the complete irrelevance

of the Mosaic Law to the Christian dispensation into which they had now passed. More clearly than the others, perhaps, Paul perceived that at Pentecost a new Age in respect to the outworking of the Divine Plan had dawned and that the old Age of the Law had passed away. Not all the believers were prepared to accept that position; there must have been many who adhered still to the older view of two dispensations only, the one in which Moses was predominant until the coming of the Messianic Kingdom in power, the other when Messiah appeared to reign as king upon the throne of David and fulfil all the golden Millennial visions of the prophets. Until Jesus should fulfil his promise and come again to receive them to himself and set up his kingdom of righteousness, Moses must remain. The newly emerging realisation that there was to be an intermediate Age, a Christian Age, between these two had not yet found full acceptance. No wonder that, in the words of verse 7, there was "much disputing", even although the Greek word denotes debating or discussion without necessarily involving the acrimony which usually goes with modern English usage of the word "dispute".

It seems to have been Peter who turned the tide of the discussion—Peter, who some fifteen years previously had most reluctantly gone to Caesarea to accept probably the first Gentile convert to Christianity, Cornelius, the Roman Centurion. He reminded his hearers of that story—they seem to have been familiar with it—and virtually demanded of the Pharisee believers present why they required a yoke to be put on the necks of the disciples, "*which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear*". Then he came out boldly on the side of Paul and his thesis of justification by faith. "*We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they*". This was the turning of the tables with a vengeance; not only did Peter deny the necessity of the Mosaic Law for Gentile believers, he denied its necessity for Jewish believers also. It says a lot for the sincerity and sense of responsibility of these Jews that the meeting did not break up into a riot. Instead, "*all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul—*". Perfect order and decorum reigned as the visitors from Antioch put their case and recounted the evidence of Divine approval upon all their work among the Gentiles and the evident purpose of God to bestow his Spirit upon all who truly believe, whether Jew or Greek, bond or free, civilised or barbarian. There

must have been a long and impressive silence after that, a period of quiet cogitation on the part of all present, for all men realised that the decision to be attained must be a generally accepted one if the future of the Christian enterprise was not to be threatened. A breach between the two main churches, Jerusalem and Antioch, was unthinkable. Calm, mature judgment was vital at this juncture. All eyes were fixed upon the tall, ascetic figure of the principal elder, the "Bishop" as he would be known today, of the Jerusalem Church, as he climbed the rostrum to deliver judgment.

James the Just, natural half-brother of Jesus, converted only after the Lord's death, was renowned and respected in all Jerusalem, even by the Pharisees and the priests, for his rigid uprightness and his devotion to the principles of the Law. The New Testament Epistle which bears his name shews very clearly how he set this devotion in proper relation to his Christianity. James could find no place for faith without works, and no place for works without faith. He was able to take a calm, unimpassioned view of the merits and demerits of Judaism and infuse that which was good into the new faith which now he professed. Completely convinced as now he was of the truth of Christianity—and he eventually died a martyr to his faith—he also understood the purpose of Judaism in the Divine Plan and the manner in which it made the advance into Christianity possible. Of all the early believers he had, apparently by common consent, been chosen the first elder of the Church at Jerusalem, and of all men he was probably the best fitted to voice the general feeling in this matter which had come before them for decision. The judgment of James, delivered on this occasion, is a most remarkable pronouncement. In a few well-chosen words, conspicuous for their brevity, he summed up the three-fold aspect of the Divine purpose and working. It is a pity that for the past three or four generations the tendency of Christian theology to diverge away from the older and well-established doctrine of the pre-Millennial Second Advent of Christ has beclouded current understanding of the implications of this passage. Christians of earlier centuries understood it perfectly and it is certain that James' hearers followed him in his application of Old Testament prophecy and endorsed it.

James' first word was to call attention to what St. Peter had just told them. God was sending the word of the Gospel into all the world to all hearers, making no difference

between Jew and Gentile. He was reconciling to himself all who came to him through faith in Christ. Now this, said James, was God's first and primary work, to take out of the nations a people for his Name. This is a work of selection, a kind of first-fruits of God's final harvest. To some extent the full force of this passage is minimised by the A.V. translators' use of "Gentiles" in this verse (15, 14) for that suggests the idea that James was talking only of the gospel going to non-Jews, in contrast to the prejudices of the Pharisaic party in the Church. In fact the Greek word "ethnos" really means nations as such and should only be translated Gentiles when the peculiar relationship of Jews with non-Jews is implicit in the context. In this verse that is not so; James is quoting Peter's insistence upon the very reverse, that God is making no distinction whatever between Jew and non-Jew in this matter of proclaiming the Gospel message to gather "a people for his Name". Hence "nations" is the correct rendering here as in some other 64 places where the word is so translated.

So, said James, Peter has declared how both doctrinal belief and the logic of events concur in showing that God has taken a first step in sending forth the Gospel to gather a people for his Name—obviously the Christian Church, then in its infancy, but destined to grow through coming generations until this part of the Divine purpose should be fulfilled. To this conception, proceeded James, agree the Old Testament prophecies; he quoted in support the words of Amos 9. 11-12 "*After this I will return, and will build again the dwelling-place of David, which is fallen down; and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord and all the nations upon whom my Name is called*". Properly to understand what James was talking about it is necessary to go back to the Old Testament, and here it is immediately noticeable that the Septuagint, from which James quoted as being the version then in common use, differs somewhat from the Massoretic of the ninth century on which the A.V. is chiefly based. The A.V. of Amos 9 says nothing about the residue of men calling upon the name of the Lord and substitutes instead a meaningless statement about Israel possessing the remnant of Edom. James, however, was talking to men who knew the Book of Amos thoroughly. The general theme of that prophet is the fact that Israel as a nation was unfaithful to God throughout her history and because of that unfaithfulness would be

scattered among all nations. That apparently hopeless state was to become the means in God's providence for the promulgation of his truth among all peoples, and at the Last Days, that work having been finished, God would gather up the "grains of wheat", the true-hearted among the sons of Israel and regather them to their own land, revived and restored. That is what James meant by "*After this I will return and build again the dwelling place of David*". The Septuagint of Amos 9. 11-12 has it "*In that day I will raise up the dwelling place of David that is fallen . . . that the remnant of men and all the nations upon whom my Name is called may earnestly seek me*". After the selection of the people for God's Name, the Christian church, and when the Last Day, the end of the Age, shall have come, God will restore to the faithful of Israel a national existence, and that for a great purpose, that the remnant of men, those who are neither of the Church nor of restored Israel, may then have an opportunity to seek the Lord. This latter is quite clearly the work of the Messianic Kingdom following the Second Advent of our Lord, and it is this clear understanding of the future which makes James' words so remarkable. The church really believed and held that they had entered upon a period in which their unbelieving countrymen were to be scattered among the nations—and that came true enough twenty years later when Titus destroyed Jerusalem and ended their national existence—but that during the scattering the Gospel would be preached and the Christian church developed and gathered out from all nations. Then, at the end of the Age and at the time of the Second Coming, Israel would be regathered in faith to the Holy Land and the Millennial Kingdom, with its world wide evangelism. have its commencement, "*that the remnant of men and all the nations may earnestly seek me*".

It was this wide conception of the Plan of God, of Jesus Christ coming into the world, not in the interests of the few, but of the many, not "*to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved*", to "*seek and to save that which was lost*", which finally steered the growing Christian community away from the shackles of Judaism. The battle was not over; there were still disputes and objections: but henceforward James and Paul, Jerusalem and Antioch, saw eye to eye on this cardinal issue and the missionary work of the Church went on with new impetus. Much in St. Paul's later teach-

ing must have stemmed at least in part from this historic conference. "God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2. 4). "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, but every man in his own order" (1 Cor. 15. 22-23). "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2. 10-11). Some have accused the great Apostle of ignoring, in these and similar passages, the fact of sin and the consequences of sin but that is unjust. St. Paul never swerved from the basic truth that the wages of sin is death and that sin and sinners must one day perish together; what he did reject, and unhesitatingly reject, was the old Judaistic idea which unhappily lingers in some Christian circles today, that God has his favourite people whom He will bring into eternal felicity and will condemn out of hand any from among the remainder who do not measure up to his standards, whether or not they have had a full opportunity to know of him and to accept him. That was the normal Judaistic view of all the Gentiles, fit objects of Divine wrath and in no sense potential inheritors of the Kingdom of God; St. Paul, although once he himself had espoused that view, now would have none of it.

So the delegates from Antioch began their homeward journey, enriched and encouraged by all they had seen and heard, and bearing with them the precious letter which enshrined the judgment of James and the endorsement of the Church at Jerusalem. One or two concessions were asked of the brethren at Antioch, matters that if conceded would eliminate any tendency to misunderstanding and possibly scandal in the church. The Greek believers were recommended to abstain from the ceremonial pollution of pagan idols. This probably referred to the prevalent custom of adorning house and gardens with artistic statues or busts representing the gods of Greece and Rome, and of eating meats part of which had previously been ceremonially offered on pagan altars: this latter meant refraining from many social feasts and visits and could mean measurable sacrifice or loss on occasion. They were recommended to abstain from the eating of flesh with the blood, something abhorrent to every Jew and likely to make a barrier between Jewish and Gentile believers in their social intercourse, their fellowship and their "agave feasts". They were warned against fornication—in this case the reference is

evidently to practices common in the pagan temples, associated with pagan worship and hallowed or made respectable on that account. It would not always be easy for a new convert quickly to realise the gulf that existed between pagan and Christian ethics in matters of this nature. But that was all. These suggestions were made in a brotherly spirit, and with that the Church at Jerusalem gave its blessing and endorsement to all that was going on at Antioch.

Judas Barsabas and Silas, two "chief men" in the Church at Jerusalem, accompanied the Apostles to Antioch. They were sent by the Church to confirm by word of mouth all that the letter contained. This whole episode is a wonderful example of Christian brotherhood and fellowship between two independent communities. They had differed on an important matter of doctrine, they might well have taken a stand each on their particular standpoint and maintained an attitude of aloofness the one from the other. A schism might have developed right at the outset which could seriously have hindered the Church's outward witness. The manner in which these two bodies of believers tackled their difficulties on the basis of their common standing in Christ constitutes a wonderful example to Christians of after times and is a condemnation of many sad events in Christian history which might have been prevented had a similar spirit prevailed. The letter was read to the assembled Church at Antioch, and, says St. Luke, "they rejoiced for the consolation". The visitors from Jerusalem "exhorted the brethren with many words and confirmed them". So were the bonds of unity forged strongly and the way laid open for further extension of the Christian gospel.

Judas Barsabas returned home; Silas remained at Antioch. Later on he became Paul's companion on his second missionary journey and appears later in the New Testament as Silvanus, the Latin form of his name (1 Thess. 1. 1. 2 Thess 1. 1 and 1 Pet. 5. 12).

Paul had not only enriched his own outlook and grasp of the faith; he had established a vital link between the two principal churches of "the Way", and he had gained a new and valuable helper. The prospect at this time must have seemed brighter than ever before, and it must have been with renewed optimism and expectation that Paul took up his duties again in Antioch, waiting for the next Divine leading for missionary service among the nations.

## WORK

There is a wealth of good common sense in Christian instruction, in the 25 verses of Colossians chapter 3, but the verse that this short article is directed on is the twenty third, which says, "*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto man*". This verse refers to our daily work, as you will see if you read the surrounding verses in the chapter.

Our life, for the most part, broadly speaking, is divided into three sections:— eating, sleeping and working. Seeing that sleeping and eating is little short of a means to keep us physically fit to work, work, then, it will be admitted, is the most important thing in our daily existence.

God is a creative being, and takes pleasure in creating (see Rev. 4. 11). We therefore, being made in his Image (Gen. 1. 27) should have a natural desire to work, create, and take pride and pleasure in doing so.

It is a sad state of affairs when we realise that a large percentage of the working public are only interested in the wage packet at the end of the week and getting through their work with the least possible effort and concentration. To a large extent this is due to mechanisation. Most occupations have been broken down into small sections. One man or woman for each section of a particular job contributes towards the finished article.

One of God's faithful of the past was asked "the secret of his service." His answer was, "There was a day when I died, utterly died—died to myself, my opinions, preferences, tastes and will—died to the world, its approval or censure—died to the approval or blame of my brethren and friends—and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God."

And is not that just what our Lord asked of his disciples—"*He that would be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.*" As another has said, "Self-denial is not cutting off an indulgence here and there, but laying the axe at the root of the tree of self, of which all indulgences are only greater or smaller branches. Self-righteousness and self-trust, self-seeking and self-pleasing, self-will, self-defense, self-glory—these are a few of the myriad branches of that deeply rooted tree." Cross-bearing likewise is "the cross on which the self-life is crucified,

Whilst it is true that precision is as high, if not higher than it has ever been, in many fields of industry, the average worker is left with the feeling that he or she has not created anything. Individuality and sense of satisfaction at the finish of the product has left many crafts.

Be this as it may, the Christian must adapt himself to these changes and continue to perform his best service. To repeat our former verse, "*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily . . .*", meaning surely, that we should tackle our work in a good spirit, giving it our best:— and as the remainder of the verse says, "*as unto the Lord and not unto man*". This implies that we have to make an extra effort and work for our earthly master (regardless of what they may be like as individuals) as we would for the Lord.

We would never dream of turning out poor or inferior work for the Lord, we would give our best, and so it must be if we are to honour the name of Christ.

There are many occupations, ranging from that of road sweeper to the big business executive, the prime minister and even the Queen. Each occupation is equally important in God's eyes, for it is the spirit in which we perform our daily task in which He is interested.

(From "Young Bible Students Messenger")

the cross of voluntary self-renunciation," just as did our Lord when he "*made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*"

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Let us in all our activities and arrangements, our organising and building, ever remember that all these "mighty works", desirable and even necessary as they are today, are not intended to endure for all time, to be jealously guarded and handed down to posterity. They are for the needs of the moment, for the promulgation of the Word of God and the edifying of the Body of Christ—UNTIL we all come, in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to the measure of the full stature of the Anointed One.

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**BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES**
**EXODUS**
**Part 6 Moses before Pharaoh**


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From the scene of the Burning Bush, under the shadow of Mount Horeb, Moses made his way to the tent of his father-in-law Jethro, a distance of probably forty miles or so. He had plenty to think about; in the solitude of that journey he had time to reflect upon the immensity of the task he had undertaken. It is probable that there was no more hesitancy; throughout the whole of the long ordeal which the narrative shows now lay before him there is not one sign of reluctance or dissent. The objections he had voiced at the Bush, as recorded in the earlier part of chapter 4, were put right out of his mind. He had accepted the commission and meant to give the whole of his life and abilities to its discharge. Very evidently the old Moses had come to the top; his life as a shepherd in Midian was now dismissed as an interlude; he was prepared to return to Egypt and take up the dream of his life where it had been abruptly broken off forty years earlier. But in thus going back he went with a difference. In Egypt he had been a man who trusted in his own strength, and that strength had betrayed him into a hasty action that destroyed in a moment his hopes of becoming the saviour of his people. Now he was returning in the strength and power of God and with assurance of success. The impetuous and impatient visionary of early life had given place to the sound judgment and unhurried decision of maturity. The man who once had fled for his life from the vengeance of an earlier Pharaoh was now to stand as a rock against which Pharaoh himself would at last fall and be broken.

Perhaps Jethro was not altogether surprised at his son-in-law's request. The few allusions we have to this Midianite chieftain suggest that he was a man of balanced judgment and mature wisdom. He was himself a descendant of Abraham and a worshipper of God; he must have known of the Divine promise that the children of Jacob would one day—in the fourth generation—return from Egypt into Canaan and inherit that land. Moses probably told him about his experience at the Burning Bush, and Jethro realised that God had revealed himself to the younger

man; that the time had come. So he gave Moses his blessing and sent him away.

The account of the journey back to Egypt, in chapter 4. v. 19-28, is noteworthy for the rather strange story of the circumcision of Gershom, Moses' firstborn. In its brevity and lack of explanation it seems pointless and repulsive. Verse 19 appears to record one more Divine message to Moses in Midian, after the Burning Bush experience, in which he received the definite word to go. He acted immediately. Verse 20 tells how he set his wife and sons upon an ass and started upon the two-hundred-mile journey. There is some question whether "sons" in the plural is correct. Gershom had evidently been born before this time, for the meaning of his name reflected Moses' feeling of being a stranger in a strange land. There is no record of the birth of Eliezer; he does not appear in the story until Moses returned to Sinai with the delivered hosts of Israel, and the meaning of his name, given, as Moses declared, because God had delivered him from the sword of Pharaoh, suggests that the deliverance of the Exodus must have taken place before the bestowal of his name. It has been pointed out that if verse 20 is to be taken literally, one ass was hardly adequate to carry Zipporah and her two sons, one of whom must in that case have been at least a growing lad. When the record of the circumcision comes up in verse 25 only one son is mentioned, and it is necessary that this son should be Gershom. Another factor in the question is that Zipporah and her son, or sons, returned to Midian before the journey was completed; Moses did not see her again until he returned to Sinai with the hosts of Israel (see *Exod.* 18. 2) and this is when Eliezer is first mentioned. Putting these facts together seems to justify the assumption that the birth of Eliezer was not many months distant when the little party set out for Egypt and that for reasons which seemed good to him Moses decided to send his wife and child back to her father, to await the birth, rather than share the rigours of the Exodus.

Before they parted, however, there was the strange incident of the circumcision. "It came to pass in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him" (4. 24). The word

rendered "inn" only means a resting place for the night; there were no inns in the modern sense of the word in the wilds of Sinai in Moses' time. The incident took place whilst they were encamped for the night at a spring or oasis, where they could get water and shade. The most likely explanation of the statement that the Lord sought to kill Moses is that Moses was suddenly stricken with some illness or malady which appeared to threaten his life and in the thought of those days the responsibility of such a visitation was accredited to God. Moses had done something to incur the Divine displeasure. It seems that Zipporah divined the reason, or at least formulated her own theory. Gershom had apparently not been circumcised. (Although circumcision was made a part of the Law binding upon all Israelites only at Sinai, at a later date, the custom as a religious rite had existed from much earlier ages among the peoples of the East. Abraham for example circumcised both his sons, Ishmael and Isaac). To think was to act; with a flint knife (the "sharp stone" of 4. 25) Zipporah fulfilled the traditional custom and, according to verse 26, the Lord departed from him (from Moses; this is the meaning of "Let him go" of 4. 26). In other words Moses recovered from his illness and all was well.

Zipporah's words in 4. 25 and 26 "*a bloody husband art thou to me*" are unnecessarily crude in the A.V. and convey a totally wrong impression. The literal sense of the phrase is "a bridegroom by blood" and her meaning was that Moses was now more intimately bound to her than ever before by the blood of her circumcised son. The suggestion so often made that the expression signified her disgust at the apparent barbarity of the custom has no force when it is remembered that Zipporah must have been perfectly familiar with the same thing among her own people. It is much more likely that her return to Midian, leaving Moses to go on alone, had already been decided upon, and that in these words Zipporah was impressing upon her husband the closeness of the tie that existed between them and of her trust in their mutual faithfulness to each other until they should be re-united.

They could not have gone far on their journey when this incident took place and Zipporah would not have more than thirty miles or so to retrace, for the next verse, 4. 27, tells of Moses meeting his brother Aaron in "the mount of God", mount Horeb, which was not much farther on. The Lord had told Aaron

to go there to meet Moses and apparently without demur the elder brother had obeyed. There need be no surprise at the apparently casual manner in which Aaron set out on his mission. Horeb was two hundred miles from the capital of Egypt, but only forty miles from the important copper mines of Serabit al Khadim. A regular route led to the mines, constantly traversed by Egyptian officials, labourers, and transport caravans carrying the raw copper into Egypt, so that Aaron would find himself on a well known and much travelled route for the greater part of his journey. It is very possible that the brothers had met on previous occasions in the same spot and that Moses had been kept well posted with news of Israel during his forty years' exile.

So Moses accompanied his brother back to Egypt, and at last found himself in the company of the elders of Israel. These were the men he must first convince before his claims and his mission could be put before the men of Israel. This reference to the elders is an interesting allusion to the system of communal authority existing during Israel's sojourn in Egypt, a system which lingered among them as an essential element in their national life right up to the period of the Kings. Supreme in the nation stood the twelve princes of the tribes. The office devolved upon the eldest son of the senior family in direct descent from the tribal head, son of Jacob. Thus the prince of Judah in Moses' time was Nahshon in the fifth generation from Judah, and an ancestor of Christ. Nahshon died during the forty years' wanderings and at the crossing of Jordan his son Salmon, who married Rahab of Jericho, was prince of Judah. Likewise Amram the father of Moses was prince of Levi until his death when the position passed to Aaron whose wife Elisheba was a sister of Nahshon. So through all their generations Israel possessed an upper hierarchy of twelve princes and one high priest, for the head of the tribe of Levi submerged his tribal princehood in his sacred office. Next to the princes came the elders, whose numbers appear to increase as the nation settled in Canaan and multiplied. In Moses' time they numbered seventy, and it might well be that originally the elders were the heads of each family sprung directly from the sons of the twelve patriarchs. These twelve princes and seventy elders, wielding authority within Israel already recognised by every man of Israel, constituted a ready-made political organisation for the administration of the

nation so soon to be created, and Moses must have realised the importance of convincing these men that God had certainly commissioned him to deliver Israel.

Aaron's eloquence was apparently adequate to the occasion. The princes and elders were convinced, and when later on the story was repeated in the ears of the assembly of the people, and Moses had performed his two signs—the miracles of the serpent and the leprous hand—*"the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had delivered the children of Israel, and had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped"* (4. 31).

This could only have been a representative gathering of the people. Israel at this time numbered several millions; Moses could hardly have made himself known personally to them all. The news would travel swiftly, from village to village throughout the land of Goshen and from street to street in the suburbs of Tanis. There would be a sufficient number scattered among the people who knew and believed in the age-old Divine promise of deliverance to hail this as the fulfilment, and the general excitement must have attained a pitch something like the Messianic expectations which gripped their descendants just before the First Advent of Christ, and the Christian world during the Advent expectations of the Nineteenth Century. The long-promised Deliverer was present, he had been seen by some and his words were repeated from mouth to mouth. The power of Egypt was to be broken and the faithful of the Lord led across the desert to a new and better land. There is not much doubt that the output of brick-making fell off and small wonder if the Egyptian taskmasters were annoyed.

One aspect of the situation which becomes obvious when thought is given to the matter is that the serfdom of slavery imposed upon the Israelites was one which still gave them time to devote to their own affairs. They possessed flocks and herds of cattle which they insisted on taking with them when the journey began. Clearly the land of Goshen was one of farms and homesteads interspersed with brickfields; it is almost certain that every Israelite was able to grow his own crops and tend his own cattle in between terms of service in the public works. It was probably a case of unremitting hard work but at least they had some opportunity to organise a kind of national life. When Moses returned from Midian he did not find, as is so often

assumed, a rabble of unorganised slaves living little better than beasts of the field. He found a community close-knit by ties of kinship, religion, and above all, hope for the future. It is doubtful if Moses would ever have induced Israel to move on the basis of their misery and oppression only; there must have been a liberal infusion of that passionate desire for a land of their own which characterises their modern descendants and has made the creation of the modern State of Israel a reality. They followed Moses because, for the moment at least, the entire people believed that the promise to Abraham *"in the fourth generation they shall come hither again"* was about to be fulfilled.

The next step was to interview Pharaoh. Chapter 5 tells the story. It is not likely that this move was made immediately. Moses and Aaron probably spent a great deal of time disseminating the news of their mission until it had become diffused throughout Israel. Some idea of what was going to be expected of them obviously had to be made known. Some organisation of the project had to be undertaken; one does not get three million people with all their flocks and herds and domestic possessions on the march by merely blowing a trumpet. Goshen was a territory the size of England south of the Thames between London and Bristol and there must obviously have been a great deal of consultation and coming and going between elders, village headmen, and all sorts of people who would be required to assume some one or other position of responsibility when the word was given. The bald, unemotional statement in 11. 41 *"it came to pass . . . the self-same day . . . that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt"* gives no indication whatever of the tremendous work that was involved in getting this whole mass of people on the move.

Eventually Moses and Aaron were satisfied that the people had a tolerably clear idea of what was expected of them. What would in more modern times have been called the communications network was established and men were at their posts awaiting the word. Human nature being what it is, there were bound to be hot-heads among the people not prepared to wait for the royal edict, and urging immediate action. A certain amount of population drift towards the eastern frontier might already have started. Brick-making would almost certainly be at a very low ebb and the Egyptian officials finding their task increasingly difficult. It is most

unlikely that this state of affairs was unknown at court and when the two leaders of the revolt appeared requesting an audience with Pharaoh there must have been lively interest in the possible outcome.

Amen-hotep II, the Pharaoh of the Exodus, had been on the throne of Egypt only seven years when Moses appeared before him. He was still a comparatively young man, certainly not more than forty, tall, handsome, arrogant and cruel. He fought two noteworthy campaigns, one in Syria and one in the Sudan, both characterised by ruthlessness and cruelty to the vanquished. One historian says of him "on all sides victory crowned his arms, but he stained the fair fame that his victories would otherwise have secured him by barbarous practices, and cruel and unnecessary bloodshed. He tells us that at Takhisa in northern Syria he killed seven kings with his own hand, and he represents himself in the act of destroying them with his war-club, not in the heat of the battle, but after they have been taken prisoners. He further adds that, after killing them, he suspended their bodies from the prow of the vessel in which he returned to Egypt, and brought them as trophies of victory to Thebes, where he hung six of the seven outside the walls of the city . . . ." An inscription on his bow, found with him in his tomb, describes him as "smiter of the cave-dwellers, overthrower of Kush" (Ethiopia or Nubia) "hacking up their cities; the Great Wall of Egypt, protector of his soldiers". Swelling, boastful words, but not enough to save his soldiers from perishing in the Red Sea . . . . "who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" he said in his arrogance: "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go".

Moses and Aaron had gone in to demand their peoples' freedom. Chap. 5 tells the story. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness". The Eternal, the Mighty; that was the significance of the phrase "Lord God". Pharaoh would have none of that. He himself was the Eternal and the Mighty so far as everything in Egypt was concerned and he was not disposed to brook a rival. He had never seen Moses before and may have been quite ignorant of his past position in the Egyptian court before his flight to Midian; Amen-hotep had probably not been born then. He dismissed their plea with contempt. "Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let (hinder) the people from their works? get you unto your burdens" (5. 4). The two mission-

aries were ushered from Pharaoh's presence to the accompaniment of laughter and jeers from the assembled attendants. It is clear that they were not considered sufficiently dangerous to be apprehended or restrained in any fashion; they were just turned into the street.

Their visit had one consequence; Pharaoh, irritated no doubt by the whole matter, called his officials and instructed them to increase the labours put upon the Israelites. "They be idle" he said "therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. Let there be more work laid upon the men—" (5. 8-9). They were no longer to be given the straw which had to be mixed with the wet clay to make good bricks. They were in future to go out and find suitable binding material for themselves. "Go ye, get you straw where you can find it; yet not ought of your work shall be diminished. So the people were scattered abroad through all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw". (5. 11. 12). There is an incidental evidence of the truth of this narrative. The ruined walls of the city of Rameses are still there; according to Exodus the Israelites laboured in the building or re-building of that city. The bricks of which the city walls are built, still in position, are made in the lower courses with a mixture of straw, in the middle course giving way to grasses, stubble and miscellaneous herbage, and in the upper courses are of dried brick having no binding material at all. Because the people found it impossible to meet their set quota of bricks in conjunction with finding their own straw, the Israelite overseers, responsible to the Egyptian officials for the maintenance of the daily output, were punished. That brought an appeal to Pharaoh, an appeal that was as scornfully rejected as had been the earlier request of Moses and Aaron. The unsuccessful overseers "did see that they were in evil case" (5. 19).

It was not surprising therefore that Moses went back to the Lord in a condition of deep perplexity. So far from being delivered, the condition of Israel was worse than before he interfered. The Lord had overruled his own reluctance to undertake this mission, brushed his objections aside, and guaranteed him success. Nothing of what was promised had come to pass. He was a failure and a subject of reproach by his people. They had accepted his word and believed in God, but God had not delivered. "Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to

*Speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all."*

(To be continued)

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## **AN OLD CLOCK SPEAKS**

There is an old clock in Wimborne Minster, Dorset, which was constructed in the 14th century. It is an unusual clock in that it indicates the hours of the day and the day of the lunar month by means of a model sun and moon both moving round a central model earth. Despite its great age the clock is still working and still indicates the correct time.

When that clock was made, it was the universal belief that the earth was the centre of the universe and that the sun moved round the earth—once every day. That was why the clock was made in that fashion, with the sun travelling round the earth to mark the hours. The discoveries of Nicolas Copernicus, which demonstrated that the sun's apparent motion round the earth is only apparent, and that it is the earth's own rotation on its axis which causes the illusion, were yet two centuries future.

So the clock was designed, and functioned, on the basis of a false theory. Nevertheless it did give correct time, and does so to this day. Although its external trappings represented the elements of a wrong understanding of science, its internal mechanism was constructed in accordance with right principles, and therefore the clock has served its intended purpose through the centuries.

So it is with the Christian life which is lived in the light of an only partially correct understanding of the Divine Plan. We are so often told of the necessity of an accurate understanding of doctrine. Almost every sect demands that its particular distinctive doctrines are necessary to real and full acceptance with God. That is not true. Repentance of sin, and justification by faith in the redemptive sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consecration of life to God on that basis, are the things which bring us into the condition of full acceptance with God. Doctrines have their place in shaping our characters and determining the course of our lives after that position has been attained, but the believer does not depend upon a full and accurate understanding of every Biblical doctrine before God can put him to useful service. To assert otherwise would be to deprive all of us of Divine approval, for with all our knowledge

of the Divine mysteries we all still know only "in part". It is not until "that which is perfect is come" that we attain to fulness of knowledge in Christ. In the meantime, even if our knowledge of Bible teaching is like the front of the clock in Wimborne Minster, a bit behind the times, not so correctly represented as it might be, let us rejoice if our internal mechanism is sound, if we have been truly reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Let us rejoice if we have been buried with him by baptism into his death, and have risen to walk with him in newness of life. We can be sure that the rest will follow in the Lord's due time. For, after all, we have the assurance "He preserveth the paths of his saints" and if in perfect sincerity we have given ourselves to him then we know that He will do the rest.

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In these days when the Christian Church in certain lands is cut off from international contacts and compelled to limit its activities in accordance with the wishes of the ruling dictatorial regime, not itself favourable to the promulgation of Christian teaching, it is worthy of remembrance that this kind of thing has happened before. The Nestorian (Syrian) Christian Church of the 8th century has long been recognised and honoured for its faith and missionary enterprise. Nestorian missionaries at that time evangelised India and China. Yet the Nestorian Christians were in subjection to Moslem rulers, for during the 8th century the Arab followers of Mahomet exercised rule over all Syria and Iraq. Even under that regime they maintained their Church life and sent out their missionaries, proclaimed their faith and perpetuated their communion—for the Syrian Church exists and is influential to-day in those Far Eastern countries where under such difficulties their spiritual forbears planted the Gospel.

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Stars shine brightest in the darkest night, spices smell best when bruised, young trees root the faster for being shaken and gold looks the brighter for scouring. Such is the condition of all God's children. They are most triumphant when most tempted; most glorious when most afflicted; most in the favour of God when least in man's and in their own. As their conflicts, such are their conquests; as their tribulation, such their triumphs. They live best in the furnace of persecution.

## **THE SADDUCEES AND THE RESURRECTION**

A consideration of Luke 20, 27-40

*"Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife."* (Luke 20. 33).

The Sadducees, who were the materialist philosophers of Jesus' day, did not believe in a resurrection to a future life and had no use for Jesus' teaching of a coming Messianic Kingdom in which "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth". (John 5. 28). They despised the simple faith of women like Martha who knew that her dead brother Lazarus would "rise again in the resurrection at the last day." (John 11. 24). And they thought they had found a weak point in the argument, to put Jesus in a quandary. So they came to him with their conundrum.

The question was based on the old Mosaic law which sought to prevent any family inheritance passing to another line in consequence of there being no male heir in the particular family. Moses had provided that in the event of a man dying without leaving a son to inherit his estate, his widow was not free to re-marry whom she pleased, neither was she at liberty to remain single. It was the obligation and duty of the dead man's nearest brother to take the widow as his wife. The first-born son of that union was then to be accounted, from the legal standpoint, not the son of his true father, but the son of the dead man, and that first-born became heir to the dead man's property, taking his family name and behaving in all ways as if he were in reality his son. By means of this custom it was hoped to keep every family inheritance in the line of the family to which it had originally belonged. Whether the custom was ever carried out in its fulness or whether it was even really practicable in later times when Israel grew into a great nation is not material to the point now at issue. Suffice it, thought these Sadducees, that here is something which cannot possibly fit into this fantastic teaching about men and women being resurrected from the dead to live on earth again.

Thus it was that Jesus listened patiently whilst they unfolded their story. There were seven brothers, good Israelites all and zealous for the laws of their fathers. The eldest was married but unfortunately he died without leaving an heir. The second son, obedient to

the Law, married the widow with the intention of raising up seed to his brother. Most regrettably, he died also, without having achieved his object. The third brother was no less zealous in his devotion to the Law, and without delay he married the already twice widowed woman. His good intentions were cut short by his own untimely demise and the unfortunate wife was passed on in turn to brothers four, five, six and seven, all of whom died in turn without son or heir. It is perhaps not surprising to learn that after this series of matrimonial disasters, the woman died also, leaving seven inheritances without owners.

Incidentally the story as framed by these Sadducees is a bitter commentary on the contempt in which women were held in the days of the First Advent. These men saw nothing distasteful in the idea of this unfortunate wife being passed on from man to man seven times repeated. The point of their question would have been equally well made had there been only two husbands involved, but they had to make it seven. The woman in the story was viewed merely as a means of producing the desired heir to the inheritance and apart from that received no consideration at all. It is important to bear that fact in mind when considering this incident.

With sly malice therefore the fateful question was brought into the open. The seven men and the woman have all been raised from the dead and stand upon earth again, alive and virile. *"Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife!"*

It is only when one considers for a moment the nature of the Mosaic laws regarding marriage that one realises just how diabolically clever was that question. It was not merely a matter of deciding which of the seven was the legal husband of the woman. The laws of Deut. 25 forbid any woman to return to her first husband after having been married to a second; to do so was "an abomination to the Lord". On that showing it would be necessary in the resurrection for this woman to remain the wife of the seventh husband. But the laws of Lev. 18 branded as criminal any man who stood in husbandly relationship to his brother's wife, during, of course, the brother's lifetime; and with the first brother now alive again and present

before them there could be no doubt that his was the first legal marriage and therefore all the other six brothers were lawbreakers and also "abomination to the Lord". To whichever brother the Lord awarded the wife, therefore, He would be recommending the breaking of one or another of the Mosaic laws on the subject and making one or more of the persons in the story into transgressors. To those legalistic minds there was no way out of the impasse; there could be no such thing as a resurrection without compelling someone or other to break the laws of Moses.

In addition to that already sufficiently condemning fact, there was also the question of the inheritances. With the seven brothers all back on earth, to whom would each property belong? The wife would have become the legal custodian of all seven estates after the death of the seventh brother, and until the birth of her first son—the son which was never born, for the Sadducees took care that in the story she died childless. But suppose in this new resurrected life she did bear a son to whichever husband secured the award of her as wife? Under the Law that son would become heir of all seven inheritances, whilst the seven original owners were standing by, morally if not legally each still entitled to his own property. There must have been a certain amount of rubbing of hands together as these learned men waited for Jesus to unravel this legal tangle.

His was a simple answer, and for all its unexpectedness it was incontrovertible. "*Those deemed worthy to obtain that age, and that resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they can die no more, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection*". (Luke 20, 35-36 Diaglott). There was a world of meaning in those few simple words of Jesus, and most of it does not occur to our Western minds until we relate the answer to the question, and the background of the question.

Jesus was not referring to people of the world generally in his reply, and He was not referring to the institution of marriage as such. He was talking about the specific problem raised by these Sadducees, the relation of the Mosaic Law on re-marriage of widows to the resurrection and mankind's future in the Millennial Age. The word "marry" in this text is one that refers to the action of a man *taking a woman to be his wife*, and is not used in this form to describe a woman entering into marriage. Likewise the word rendered

"given in marriage" is one that refers to the *giving of a woman to a man*, as by a relative who thus formally hands her over much as a modern bride's father will "give away" his daughter at the ceremony, or as Ruth the Moabitess was given to Boaz to be his wife that he might raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. Both terms are consistent with the conclusion that Jesus was telling the Sadducees that in the future age men would not take women in marriage for the purpose laid down in the Mosaic Law, neither would women be given in marriage for that purpose, *because men will die no more*, like the angels. Quite obviously in a world where there is no death the question of raising up an heir to a dead man's inheritance will not arise. Likewise the puzzle of deciding who will be the rightful heir to the inheritances is very simply resolved when it is realised, as Jesus made those men realise, that all men in the Millennial Age are sons or children of God, being children no longer of Adam by lineal descent, but children of God by virtue of the resurrection. Rights to inheritances which are dependent on lineal descent will no longer have any validity in a world where there is no such thing as lineal descent, and so here again the Sadducees' unspoken question fell to the ground.

In few words, Jesus answered the question, not by setting aside the law of Moses nor yet by nullifying its prohibitions, but by showing that the conditions which brought the Mosaic Law into being will no longer apply. The remarriage of widows to their brothers-in-law for the preservation of inheritances was an arrangement that owed its existence to the fact that death was in the world. Jesus showed that since in the next Age there will be no death the problem will never arise.

The expression applied to those who have been "accounted worthy to obtain that Age" to the effect that "neither *can* they die any more" is liable to provoke queries when it is remembered that if any man should give himself over to deliberate and incorrigible sin, in that day, he can and will assuredly die. It seems evident that Jesus is referring to the completed work of the Age, and the fulness of resurrected life which is the portion of those who are adjudged righteous at the end of the Age, when He uses the phrase "accounted worthy to obtain that Age and that resurrection". There is no question of worthiness in the first awakening from the sleep of death at the beginning of the Millennial Age. "All that are in their graves" said Jesus, and *all* it

must be without reference to worthiness or to unworthiness. And in such case it is literally true that those who pass into the Ages of Glory, perfect and righteous, *cannot* die. It will be no more possible for a righteous man to die than for an unrighteous man to live. That is the Divine decree. God made man to live, and all the time that any man in those ages of eternity lives in harmony with righteousness he can do nothing else but live. Eternal life is as much a concomitant of righteousness as is eternal death of sin.

The A.V. text says that such are "equal to the angels" which is manifestly incorrect. Man, even perfect man, is inferior to, and not equal to, the angels. Says the Psalmist "*What is man, that thou art mindful of him . . . Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels . . . thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thine hands*". (Psa. 8. 4-6). The correct rendering of the text is as in the Diaglott—they can die no more because they are *like* angels, in the fact that they are perfect and sinless.

Jesus left quite untouched the wider question of the relationship of the sexes in the future Age. This text is sometimes taken as basis for the assertion that human beings will be sexless in that Age, neither man nor woman, but combining the qualities of both. There is really no evidence that Jesus intended to convey any such idea. The indications are in fact to the contrary. It is hardly likely that so revolutionary and unnatural a teaching would have won from some of the listening scribes the admiring admission "Master, thou hast well said". The question which inspired this glimpse of the future was not answered by saying there would no longer be men and women, but that there would no longer be death, and that disposed of the matter for good. There is also the fact that Jesus told them they ought to have known the answer to the question from the Scriptures: "*Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, or the power of God*". Behind all the complicated legislation of Moses, which in the future Age is to be swept away, there lay the original Divine institution of marriage inherent in the original Divine ideal for mankind, and

The discouragements and disappointments and disillusionments of this our day, in this our Christian walk, are so great and forceful that we need a power in our lives able to withstand their assaults. That power is our possession of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of faith and of hope, and, too, the Spirit of joy.

that is certainly not going to be swept away. The first chapter of Genesis gives us the culminating point to which Divine creation had attained prior to the entry of sin. God created man "*in his own image, in the likeness of God created he him; male and female created he them . . . and God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good*". In the expanded account of man's creation which we have in the second chapter of Genesis the statement is plainly made that it was not good for man to be alone and therefore God ordained a companion for him. That was before sin entered, when there was at the very least the possibility that man might develop his inheritance as God had instructed him without ever yielding to sin. There is no reason for thinking that the dual principle which pervades nearly all Nature and certainly the whole of the higher orders of life, and was extended to man at his creation, is going to be changed, or that perfect humanity at the end of God's creative work is fundamentally any different to perfect humanity at the beginning of that work. The Scripture does not discourse in detail on the conditions of human existence after the consummation of the Divine Plan and the final defeat of evil; we can only reason from the general principles of God's creation, but so far as this particular aspect of the subject is concerned we are on fundamentally more secure ground in the first two chapters of Genesis than we would be by taking the narrative of Luke 20 out of its context and applying it to something which was not in question and was not being discussed.

This incident is a striking example of the folly of men who thought they could prove the fundamental unsoundness of Jesus' teaching. "*Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures*". How often is the same thing repeated in our day! Men criticise and deride the message of the Kingdom because they neither understand nor want to understand its principles. Happy are we if, like Jesus, we can base our message and our faith upon the unassailable Word of God, which "*liveth and abideth for ever*".

"Oh God keep us from the arrogance that dares to judge either ourselves or others. We know not which is the most treasured of thy vessels—the crudest earthenware—the finest porcelain—only that both are fashioned by Thee—loved by Thee—used by Thee."



Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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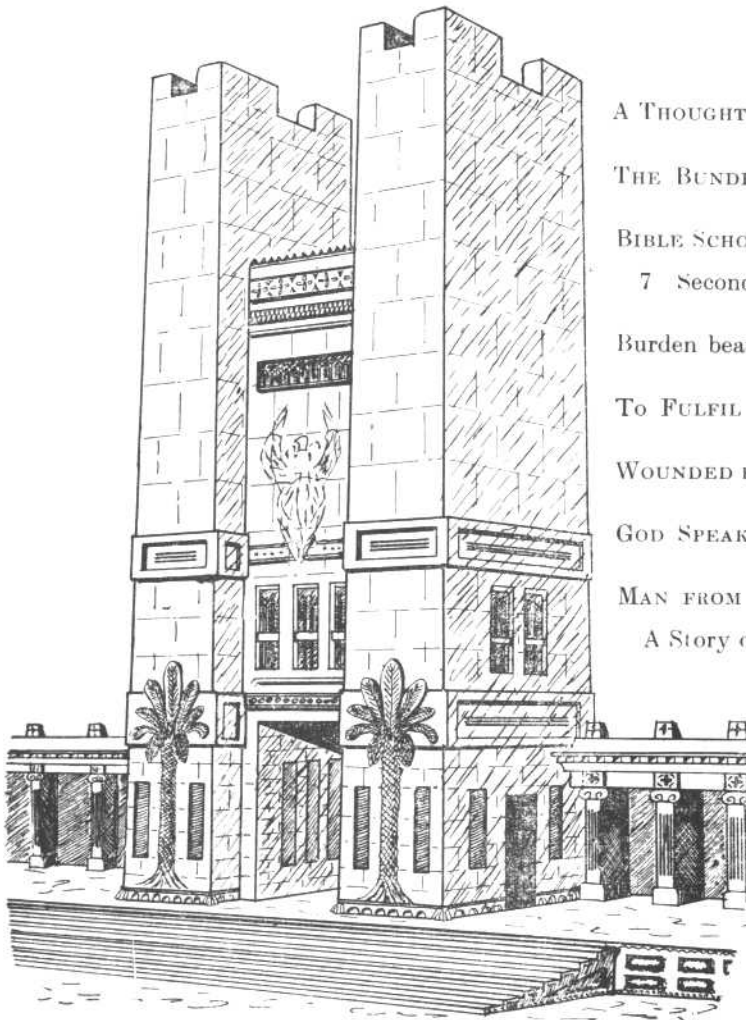
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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### A Thought for the Month

A report from Israel says that a financial syndicate is proposing to rebuild the city of Sodom as an ultra-modern pleasure resort with full gambling facilities and every other accompanying amenity along the lines of certain existing notorious places in both the Old and New Worlds. It is said that a scornful comment has been made in Israel "wasn't once enough?" It would seem not; the fearful catastrophe which destroyed the ancient city of Sodom, with all its wickedness, nearly four thousand years ago has been long since forgotten by men. And words spoken by the Most High with respect to the circumstances of that catastrophe bear a frightening resemblance to the conditions of society in the present day. "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me, therefore I took them away as I saw good." (Ezek. 16. 49-50). The sins of Sodom are permeating human society to-day in ever increasing degree; the standards which God has set remain the same, and man in flouting them cannot escape the consequences. The fiery doom which enveloped Sodom at the last, when the subterranean oil and bitumen deposits, ignited by some means unknown, went up in one vast maelstrom of roaring fire and blotted out the Cities of the Plain, was a replica in miniature of the destruction which must come upon all the institutions of evil when at the end of the Age God "arises to shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2. 19). "For all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my zeal." (Zeph. 3. 8). It is a wonderful testimony to the transcendent truth that God can and will destroy sin without destroying the sinner who repents, no matter how late or how tardy his repentance, that in that latter passage He goes on to say (vs. 9) "For then

will I turn to the people a pure language that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." Had Christ preached to Sodom they would have repented (Matt. 11). In the day of judgment it will be "more tolerable" for them than Israel of Jesus' day. So in judgment there is opportunity to profit by judgment, for Sodom and for this modern world. After the fire, a pure language for whosoever will turn to God.

In common with several other journals we are asked to make the following announcement on behalf of the friends who organise the function referred to. "The usual August Bible students Convention will be held (D.V.) at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1. from Saturday, 1st August to Monday, 3rd August. Brethren of the sponsoring classes—Central London, Forest Gate, Welling and Windsor—extend a warm invitation to all to join with them in fellowship on this occasion. It is also their desire that a baptismal service should be arranged for any who wish to symbolise their consecration to God. However we can only make arrangements for such a service if we receive a request before 22nd May. Providing we do, appropriate arrangements will be made and further applications will be welcome thereafter. Write direct to the convention secretary, Bro. D. Walton, 25 Brushwood Drive, Chorleywood, Herts to whom also all enquiries concerning the convention should be addressed.

#### Gone from us

Sis. A. Eastment (Lincoln)  
 Bro. E. C. Hamm (Whittier, Calif. U.S.A.)  
 Sis. A. Hawley (Sheffield)  
 Bro. H. Major (Warwick & Gloucester)

"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away"

## THE BUNDLE OF LIFE

An exposition

"A man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul; but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling." (1 Sam. 25. 29).

The "bundle of life"! Rather a strange phrase! What does it mean?

The story tells how Abigail, wife of the boorish Israelite Nabal, came with urgency to David—not yet king of Israel; only a free-booting chieftain of outlaws—to dissuade him from his purpose of revenge for Nabal's discourtesy and enmity. The gist of her plea was that since David was avowedly a man trusting in God he could well leave the question of vengeance to God rather than embroil his own hands in blood. David listened to her entreaty, accepted her advice and turned from his purpose. Eventually Nabal died from natural causes and later on Abigail became the wife of David.

This verse is the core of Abigail's assurance. "*The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God*". Leeser has it "*the bond of life*" and the R.S.V. "*the bundle of the living in the care of God*". This latter points more clearly to Abigail's meaning. The life of David was bound up in the purposes and therefore in the care and supervision of the Most High. The word "bundle" is *tseror*, which means something bound up or enclosed in a bag for safety. "*A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me*" sings the bride in Cant. 1. 13; an object of love and devotion to be clasped and held closely. Jacob's sons had "bundles" or "bags" of money in their sacks. The same word is translated "bag" on occasion. The goodman "*has taken a bag of money*" with him on his journey (Prov. 7. 20). The transgression of Job "*is sealed up in a bag*" (Job 14. 17), and God "*bindeth up the waters in the thick clouds*" (Job 26. 8). The "testimony" of God is said to be "*bound up*" among the disciples in Isa. 8. 16. From these and other occurrences it is plain that the meaning of "bundle of life" is that of a thing most precious to God which He is preserving carefully and holding close to Himself.

Ignoring Saul, who was deposed for disobedience, David was the first of a long line of Israelite kings who "*sat upon the throne of*

*the Lord*". Taking no account of their personal failings and misdemeanours—David himself was far from an ideal character—they symbolised the Divine rule of the Most High over the sons of men. God made a covenant, a formal compact, with David to the effect that of his seed would come the king that should fulfil the original promise made to Abraham, that all nations of the earth should ultimately be blessed. In a rudimentary kind of way this was a promise of the eventual establishment of a righteous rule among men and the banishing of evil—the kingdom of God upon earth, the reign of the Messiah. That is how Israel always understood the matter and how Christians familiar with the prophetic Scriptures normally understand the matter to-day. Speaking to a later generation through the prophet Isaiah God says "*Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David*" (Isa. 50. 3). The sure mercies are the things which fulfil the promise to David and the setting of the chapter shows that the time is that of the Messianic Kingdom, when Christ reigns as king. The life of David, therefore, was bound up in the purposes of God and under the protection of God in order that the promise might be fulfilled. How much Abigail knew of this, or whether, being at least a woman of faith, she was led by the Holy Spirit to speak thus, it is impossible to determine, but the truth of her declaration is evident to all who know anything about the Divine promise to Abraham through Jacob and David which culminated in Christ. St. Peter made this clear in the first Christian sermon to be preached. "*David . . . knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins . . . he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne . . . This Jesus hath God raised up . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ*" (Acts 2. 29-36). And in his second sermon he went on to speak of this same Christ coming again at the times of restitution of all things to bring to a climax the blessing of all nations, the basis of the original promise, which points clearly to the world-wide conversion of mankind under the Messianic kingdom. All this was involved in the preservation of

the life of David, in *"the soul of my lord"* being *"bound in the bundle of the living in the care of God"*.

An important aspect of the character of God and the principles by which He governs is illustrated in this matter. Apart from his reverential faith in, and fierce loyalty to, his God, David was not a particularly attractive individual. A dispassionate consideration of his recorded history shows much to be deplored in the story of his life. He was very much like all men, a mixture of good and bad. Yet God had bound up his life with Himself that he might be preserved to better things and used in a significant manner in the outworking of the Divine Plan. That is true of all mankind. God created man with a purpose in view and will not lightly relinquish His hold on any man until it is abundantly clear that the purpose can never be fulfilled purely on account of the man's own irrevocable opposition. The sin of David in the matter of Uriah the Hittite was forgiven after he had sincerely repented even although that sin had to involve retribution first, in the death of the child David loved. His deeds of blood were forgiven after he had confessed his guilt and unworthiness and come to a better understanding of the ways of God, even though he suffered the irrevocable consequence in not being allowed to build the Temple, a project upon which he had set his heart. So it is with man. The life of every man is precious to God and is bound up in the bundle of the living in His care and it will be an obdurate and determined heart indeed that withstands to the end all that God brings to bear upon it of persuasion and encouragement to repentance. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Colossians, says of Christian believers who are utterly and completely dedicated to their Lord and altogether surrendered to the transforming influence of the Holy Spirit that their *"life is hid with Christ in God"* (Col. 3. 3). This is precisely the same idea which Abigail expressed when she told David that his soul was bound up in the bundle of the living in the care of God. The fundamental difference is that the believers whose lives are thus hidden with Christ in God have been reconciled with Him by a living and vital faith in Christ and on that basis have given themselves in unre-served dedication and consecration of life to God for His service. They have entered, willingly, voluntarily, into their place in His purpose. All the remainder, those who have not yet come to that point of repentance and conversion, have not yet become thus recon-

ciled, are still outside their place in God's purpose, but are definitely bound up in His bundle of life and will remain so until it has been demonstrated beyond all shadow of doubt that their rejection of Christ and all for which He stands is final and irrevocable.

No man can say how many or how few of such there will be. We only know that nothing that defiles or is unclean will ever be permitted to enter the Holy City at the end (Rev. 21. 27), and that after the final work of God with mankind, whosoever is *"not found written in the Book of Life"* is *"cast into the lake of fire"* which *"is the second death"* (Rev. 20. 14-15). That latter imagery is based upon the fiery valley of Gehenna outside Jerusalem where the city refuse was burnt and thus signifies the utter destruction of all that is evil. That which is good remains eternally; that which is evil ceases to exist: and there is no escape from this Divine law.

But all the emphasis in the Bible is on the triumph of good. The soul of every man is preserved in the bundle of life in order that he may have every possible opportunity to free himself from the dominion of evil and enter into the *"glorious liberty of the children of God"* (Rom. 8. 21). The confidence of Abigail is justified in a sphere and on a scale that never entered her own mind; the instinct which told her God was guiding David and preserving him for a great purpose is the same which tells us in no uncertain terms that God is steadily bringing to pass in history the elements of an all embracing Plan having as its object the reconciliation to Himself, and the ushering into an everlasting inheritance, of *"whosoever will"* from amongst mankind. *"The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'. And let him that heareth say 'Come'. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"* (Rev. 22. 17). The Apostle Paul told the Athenians that *"In him we live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17. 28). That statement may very well be more, far more, than a figure of speech. We may yet find, when we pass into the *"glory that excelleth"*, where knowledge of things now hidden is possible to us, that in a very real and literal sense our life is indeed bound up in Him and that without Him we cannot have life. Such an understanding renders it much easier to understand why it is, in an equally literal fashion, that *"the wages of sin is death"*—the antithesis of life—*"but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

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**BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES**
**EXODUS**
**Part 7 Second Interview with Pharaoh**


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From chapter 6 onward the pace of the narrative quickens. The first request to Pharaoh that he let the people go had resulted in a blunt refusal and an increase of the labours demanded of them. Moses was puzzled and discouraged and his reputation among the people at a low ebb. The promised deliverance seemed as far off as ever. But now God takes a hand. It is almost as though Pharaoh had been given an opportunity to set free the enslaved people without loss of dignity to himself, and had scornfully rejected the opportunity. Moses, for all his discouragement, was still in communion with God and the Lord was still able to talk to him. So, probably very soon after the fiasco of chapter 5, the word of the Lord came to Moses again.

*"Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land."* (ch. 6. 1). Stirring words, Moses probably thought to himself, but when were they to be justified by reality? He was likely to be rather dubious about saying such things to Israel again in the light of what had happened. He had been back in Egypt probably several months. He had roused the nation and prepared them so far as he could for the great journey. He had relied on the promise of God that Divine power would be manifest for their deliverance but so far nothing concrete had appeared. From the human point of view no evidence had been presented to show that deliverance was at hand; the position looked as hopeless as it had always been.

Looking back upon the protracted ordeal of Israel from the standpoint of the completed record in the Book of Exodus it is easier than it was for Moses at the time to perceive something of the reason behind God's apparent dilatoriness. Israel yet had much to learn; this deliverance and the events which were immediately to follow it were designed in Divine providence to instil into the people a conviction of the purpose of God and their own relation to Him and to that purpose. It was not just a question of rescuing them from the power of one master and then leaving them to their own devices and to follow their own way. They were to be brought into the service of another Master and to be a people fashioned and developed that in the end they

in their turn might play an important part in the work of saving all men, not just from the power of an evil monarch, but from the power of all evil itself. They were destined to become God's witnesses to declare His salvation to the ends of the earth. And therefore the process of their own deliverance from Egypt must be one of successive steps in the understanding of the issues involved and the end toward which they were being led.

So Moses found himself given another commission to discharge to Israel. He was to repeat the promise of imminent deliverance but he was to relate it to the Person and power of God. Verses 2 to 8 of chapter 6 enshrine this pronouncement and it is one of supreme importance. The opening statement in verse 2 asserts the supremacy and uniqueness of God; there is no other like Him; He is the One God. Israel never forgot that. Secondly, He was the God of their ancestors, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the One who led them and protected them throughout their long lives. It is here that the conception of God as the Eternal first came to Israel and through them to all men. *"I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah (Yahweh—the Eternal One) was I not known to them."* (vs. 3). It is to be feared that Israel looked upon the Lord as their own tribal God for many generations after that, but the seed was there and very slowly some in Israel came to perceive something of the truth—as Solomon dedicating his temple *"Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth; beho'd. heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built"* (2 Chron. 6. 18), and Paul at Athens *"In him we live, and move, and have our being"* (Acts 17. 28). From that God goes on to acknowledge the covenant He made with the patriarchs that guaranteed possession of the land of Canaan to Israel. And then He declares once again that He is quite aware of the distress of Israel in their present situation. He has remembered the covenant, and will assuredly fulfil His promise. Verses 6 and 7 are of great moment. God will on the one hand bring them out from Egypt to the accompaniment of momentous judgments on the Egyptians; He will on the other hand take them to himself to be his own

people in a special sense. Not only will Egypt know Him as God by his destructive judgments; Israel also will know Him as God by his preserving power. So Moses went to the children of Israel with this message, which related the past with the present and the purposes of God with their promised deliverance so shortly to be realized, and they would have none of it. They hearkened not "for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage."

Perhaps the Lord did not expect them to hearken. There is no word of reproof at their refusal; there is in fact no comment whatever. Perhaps the Lord understood only too well and the message was really so that it would be remembered in later and happier times, after the deliverance had become an accomplished fact. Without further parley God now sends Moses on a fresh mission, to go to Pharaoh a second time and demand the people's freedom. He was told in advance that the demand would be refused, but he was given no instruction what to do after that.

This part of the narrative is broken in the middle by the insertion of a genealogy of Moses' family. The command to go to Pharaoh the second time, and the fulfilment of that command, occupies chap. 6 vs. 10-13 and 28-30, and chap. 7. 1-13. In between, chap. 6 vs. 16-27, is found this genealogy. It has been suggested that this insertion was the rather clumsy work of a later reviser, but there is no need to doubt that it forms part of the original book and appears here of set purpose. At this point in the narrative Moses and Aaron move into the position of leaders of Israel. Up to verse 9 of chap. 6 the people still would not accept their leadership or believe in their Divine mission. From chap. 7 onward that situation existed no longer. The manifest signs that God was at last moving to their aid led them to accept Moses and Aaron unreservedly. From then on until forty years later, when they arrived at the borders of the Promised Land, despite occasional minor rebellions, Moses remained their acknowledged chieftain. It would be very fitting therefore, and quite in accordance with what we know of Moses' regard for the prophecies, that he should insert at this point a plain statement of his descent from the fathers of the nation. His known early life as the reputed son of Pharaoh's daughter, and his subsequent forty years in Midian as a member of a Midianite tribe, married to a Midianite woman, might easily lead some to query the genuineness of his Israelite blood, and to make that the excuse for disputing his lead-

ership. Moses obviated all possibility of that at the outset by setting out his own relationship to the sons of Jacob. He goes back to the patriarch's twelve sons, mentioning first the two eldest, Reuben and Simeon. These were Jacob's first sons, by Leah. Levi was the third. Moses then gives the line of descent from Levi to himself, Levi, Kohath, Amram his father. He completes the list with the names of his uncles and cousins on his father's side, his brother Aaron's marriage to Elisheba sister of Naashon the prince of the tribe of Judah, the sons of that marriage, and the marriage of Phinehas the son of his nephew. With the family tree thus set out—and the mention of Phinehas, who was born in the wilderness during the forty years' wanderings, shows that it must have been written after the departure from Egypt—Moses drives home his point with intense reiteration "These are that Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, 'Bring out the children of Israel . . . these are they which spake to Pharaoh king of Egypt . . . these are that Moses and Aaron.'" (Vs. 26, 27). It is perhaps significant that it was in the wilderness, toward the end of the forty years' wanderings, that Korah, also a descendant of Levi through his son Izhar, and therefore by descent equal in status to Moses, staged the rebellion against Moses' authority which ended in the destruction of the rebels. It might well have been this challenge which led Moses to insert the genealogy in this place to settle any future dispute.

Moses had already interviewed Pharaoh once and been repulsed; now he was commanded to go again. One might have thought that the oppression of Israel having already lasted for more than a century, the lot of the people growing more miserable all the time, and an emphatic refusal to give them their freedom having already been expressed by Pharaoh, there was no point in extending further tolerance. But that is not God's way. The One who wills not the death of the sinner, but rather that he turn from his evil way and lives, exemplified the principle on which He deals with all mankind by extending every possible opportunity for repentance to this Pharaoh, even although the net effect was progressively to harden Pharaoh's heart with each repetition of forbearance.

It may be appropriate at this point to consider what is meant by the repeated statements in chapters 7-11 to the effect that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he should not let the people go. On the surface

meaning of the words this would appear a most unjust proceeding if in fact Pharaoh was not a perfectly free agent in the matter. It is probably much nearer the truth to conclude that in using such words the Lord indicated His own knowledge that his leniency throughout the whole series of plagues about to come would only have the effect of confirming Pharaoh in the course he wanted to follow. It would not be the first time that a man has cried out to God every time he is in trouble and hardened his heart against Him every time the trouble is lifted. Israel during their national history did the same thing often enough. So here, God knew perfectly well that every time He lifted one of the plagues He would only succeed in hardening Pharaoh's heart still further, until the final stroke which did at last induce the Egyptian monarch to let the people go. The expression occurs fifteen times in Exodus. Six times it is said the Lord hardened his heart, once that Pharaoh himself hardened his heart, and eight times that his heart was hardened, or hardened itself (this latter being the grammatical sense of 7. 13; 8. 15; and 9. 34). The history of the Oppression and the attitude of Pharaoh when Moses first went in to request the people's freedom is sufficient to show that Pharaoh needed no assistance in making his heart hard; it was hard enough already. A perfectly reasonable understanding of these words is that it was the goodness of God that hardened Pharaoh's heart throughout the entire process, and God knew beforehand that it would be so. But He still gave Pharaoh ten chances!

The expression in 9. 16 "*In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power*" has been thought to indicate that God specially set this particular Pharaoh on the throne in order that He might, as it were, "make an example of him". Dr. Adam Clarke pointed out that the word used means "made to stand" or be supported, not raised up as though brought out of obscurity to occupy a position of prominence. The meaning of the expression here is that God kept Pharaoh standing, by his repeated removals of the plagues, until the Divine purpose in the whole matter was completed and his power manifested in all that was done.

So once more the two brothers appeared in the royal presence. Chap. 7. 1-13 enshrines the account of this interview. There is no record of what was said, only of what was done. Aaron cast his rod to the ground and it became a serpent. This was the sign by which

Moses sought to convince Israel of his mission, by power bestowed from on high. Now Aaron possessed the same power, and exercised it in Pharaoh's sight as evidence of Divine authority. Pharaoh was not impressed; he sent for his own court magicians and they easily repeated the wonder. They cast down their rods and they too became serpents. Whether this was by sleight of hand, a kind of super conjuring trick, or by some power not now understood, may be a matter for speculation but cannot be dogmatically affirmed either way in the absence of any recorded facts beyond the bare statement that it was so. Commentators of past generations used to argue learnedly that the magicians' rods were turned into serpents by the power of the "familiar spirits", the evil spirits, whom the magicians served. On the other hand, the known ingenuity of the Egyptian priesthood in producing all kinds of illusions in their temples in order to deceive the people would render a trick of this kind quite an easy matter. Records remain of elaborate mechanical contrivances, including even simple steam engines, by means of which these deceptions were produced. They betoken a knowledge of mechanics and physics, of the behaviour of solids, liquids and gases, which is not usually associated with so early a period in the world's history. It might well have been, therefore, that this is the true explanation. Pharaoh's magicians, challenged to match the Israelite's miracle, produced their own staffs and with a flourish threw them to the floor—and where there formerly had been only one serpent there now writhed and twisted a number.

So far so good. The next movement, however, was not in the book. Aaron's serpent promptly swallowed all the magicians' serpents. It does not seem that the magicians could do anything about that. In fact they are not mentioned again during this episode. They probably bowed themselves out of the royal presence as quickly as was consistent with discretion. It does not seem that Pharaoh himself was unduly perturbed by this unexpected turn of events. Probably he concluded that Aaron and Moses were rather better conjurers than his own magicians; it was unfortunate perhaps that the Israelite had beat his own men in a contest of skill but that was about all there was to it. He might have made a mental note to instruct his magicians to take a refresher course in the technique of their craft before appearing before him again, but it is evident he did not take the matter

very seriously. "His heart hardened itself and he hearkened not unto them." That is the literal meaning of 7. 13. Whatever words passed between Moses and Pharaoh after the abortive incident of the serpents, it is clear that Pharaoh had no intention of giving way.

For the second time therefore Moses and Aaron left the royal palace without having gained their end. Almost certainly the princes and elders of Israel would be waiting for them for news of progress and again the two leaders had to report failure. The position remained as before. Strangely, however, there is no record this time either of despondency on Moses's part or unbelief on Israel's part. The atmosphere seems to be completely different. The narrative sweeps straight on into the account of the Ten Plagues and so into the Exodus itself. There must have been something behind this marked change of outlook. For some reason both Moses and Israel were confident where formerly they had been discouraged and unbelieving. Something had happened which completely altered their reaction to events.

It might have been the miracle of the serpents. In all the complicated religious mysticism of the Egyptians, involved as it was with all kinds of grotesque animal gods and animal devils, concerned, even obsessed, with details

of death and resurrection and the after-life, one of their fears was that the soul might be eaten by serpents in the under world and thus be annihilated for ever. The "Book of the Dead", the ancient sacred book of the Egyptians, contains several rubrics or prayers the recitation of which was intended to avert this calamity. When Aaron's serpent swallowed up the magicians' serpents there might very well have been consternation and horror on the part of the Egyptians; when the story reached the Israelites they might very well have interpreted it as an omen and a sign that God was indeed fighting for them and that the power of Egypt was to be destroyed. Moses and Aaron did not need to have any belief in Egyptian mythology to perceive the hand of God in this particular happening and it might well be that it was the swallowing of those serpents which gave Moses just that assurance he needed that God was in fact going to deliver Israel and overthrow their enemies.

It was in that spirit and confidence, a few days later, that Aaron and Moses used that same rod to initiate the celebrated sequence of happenings which forced Pharaoh eventually to let the people of Israel go—the Ten Plagues of Egypt.

(To be continued)

## BURDEN BEARERS

As the years pass, and our relations with men multiply, and we look more searchingly behind the fair outsides of life, as our faith grows more settled and calm, trials are apt to accumulate upon us. Of those whom we love, some pass away from us, and some fall into lingering sicknesses; some disappoint the fond hopes we had cherished of them, and others suffer much that is good and admirable in them to be blighted by a secret vice, or propensity, which threatens to be their ruin; cares of business and domestic cares throng in upon us; our health declines, perhaps, or we grow conscious that the spring and elasticity of earlier days are gone, and that all tasks are harder to us, and all burdens heavier to be borne. There are times when one feels as though his heart were turned into a kind of hospital, with a sick-bed for this friend, and another for that, until the whole night is taken up with cares and solitudes and the strain becomes well-nigh intolerable. If this be our experience—as at times it is the experience of most kindly and Christian men and women—yet why should we complain? This, like every other trial, is Christ's gift to

us; it is part of the reward He bestows on them that are His. We have served him in easier tasks; and now He honours us by asking us to serve him in a task that is harder. We have met the common tests; and now He applies a still severer test, *that, being tried to the full, we may also be blessed to the full*. When we thank him for having called us into his service, and say that for aught we have done for him we will ask no reward save that we may serve him still and better, do we mean what we say? Very well, then; in giving us harder tasks, and trials more severe and searching, He is but taking us at our word, and giving us the very reward we have asked. Rather than complain, therefore, that life grows heavier to us, we will remember him who had room in his heart for every man that breathed, and grace for as many as were weak, and comfort for all who mourned. We crave to be like him, do we not? And we can become like him who learned obedience and was made perfect by the things which He suffered, only by partaking of similar experiences, by bearing our trials, and whatever they may be, with a patient and cheerful heart.

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## **"TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS"**

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Some thoughts  
on baptism

John lifted up his eyes from the water in which he stood and beheld his cousin Jesus stepping into the stream to be baptised by him, and his whole being rebelled within him at the very thought. "I have need to be baptised of thee" he protested "and comest thou to me?" He knew, perhaps better than any other man, the spotless life of this One standing before him. Whether or no he had realised prior to this moment that the firstborn son of Mary was indeed the Messiah that he had been proclaiming for six months past, he knew well that of all men in Jewry this One least needed his baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Therefore he demurred, and in his idea of what was fitting would not lift his hand to baptise his cousin, until the quiet, compelling voice of Jesus broke down his resistance and induced compliance with the request. "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." (Matt. 3. 13-17). So Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, led the way and set the example in the performance of a ceremonial symbol which His disciples, with but few exceptions, have followed ever since.

What is the significance of this act which has occupied so prominent a place in Christian thought and practice through the centuries? Is it nothing more than a ritual cleansing, a sign that the believer has been purified and made acceptable in God's sight and accepted into His Church, or does it indicate some deeper and more far-reaching truth? The fact that the Apostles and the Early Church attached so much importance to the ceremony—no less than thirteen instances are recorded in the Book of Acts—surely justifies at the very least some serious consideration of this subject.

"Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness!" What did our Lord mean. He himself, holy, harmless, separate from sinners, surely needed no "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins", which was the avowed purpose of John's baptism (Mark 1. 4). Neither did He dispute or deny John's implied assertion that He needed no baptism of that nature. Quietly, nevertheless, He insisted upon going through the ceremony. That it marked some very definite change in His life and work is shown very clearly in the fact that at this time He began His ministry, a

ministry that culminated three and a half years later in His death on the cross.

The word translated "righteousness" in this text is used in the New Testament for "righteousness" ninety-four times. It is the word that in a slightly different form is used for "justification", and its primary meaning is that of being right with God or doing the thing that is right with God. Wilson's "Emphatic Diaglott" translates "it is becoming us to establish every ordinance" and this may express something of the thought, although the true meaning is undoubtedly that of "filling full", or fulfilling, the thing that is right with God. In other words, this is an instance of "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God". And in so coming to Jordan and sinking beneath the waters, then rising again and going forth into a new life, Jesus was assuredly doing something that had a significance far greater than that of mere cleansing, a significance that touches things of the future life and the next world, penetrating into Ages which as yet have not dawned. What He did must have been for His followers' sakes as well as his own, that they might understand the relation of this simple act to their own lives and standing before God, when in their turn they too came, as Jesus did when He was thirty years of age, to enter upon a life of consecration unto death for the salvation of the world.

It is usual to go back to the Old Testament for light on the rituals and the doctrines of the New Testament. In the case of baptism the Old Testament very nearly fails us, but not quite. There is no such thing as baptism in the Old Testament; the word is not mentioned and the children of Israel at no time in their history practised baptism. When John the Baptist waded into Jordan and commenced baptising repentant Jews for the remission of their sins he was instituting something entirely new. The idea of repentance was not new but this expressing of repentance by an outward act was. But John's baptism did have a basis and something of that basis is found in the Old Testament. The Law provided that those who came to the Lord with offerings and sacrifices must first be ceremonially clean by washing in water. The priest before being inducted into office was first washed in the great "Laver" in the Court of the Tabernacle.

In that simple act and the consecration ceremony which succeeded it we have the principles upon which acceptance with God is achieved. *Cleansing—Anointing—Sacrifice*; that was the order of things in the duty of priests in Israel and the same order prevails among Christians now. Repentance and belief in Christ brings justification by faith. That is the first step. That is cleansing. That is the truth lying behind Paul's word to the Ephesians when he declares that Christ gave Himself for His followers, the Church, "*that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word*" (Eph. 5. 26) and his declaration to Titus that Jesus saves us "*by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (Titus 3. 5). The washing must come before the renewing.

That is only one aspect of the true baptism that lies behind the symbol, the ceremonial. The second aspect is that which follows the initial justification, and is best expressed in the words of Paul to the Romans (Rom. 6. 4-5) "*we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death . . .*" Here is a theme that has nothing to do with cleansing but everything to do with the dedication of life to death that out of death there might come eternal life. It has to do with the going into death of the few, following the One Who first went into death alone, that out of that death all might be received into life. And that in turn harks back to a truth that was first enunciated in New Testament days by Peter on the Day of Pentecost itself, that this coming of man into eternal life is really a restoration of that which existed at the first. "Times of Restitution of all things" he calls the day when this new life is to be extended to all men, for there was a day at the very beginning when man, newly created by the hand of God, had eternal life within his grasp.

It is because the surviving records of those far-off days are so scanty that we are not able completely to trace this aspect of the doctrine of baptism back to its probable origin in the days of the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3. 15). The Apostle Paul, whose knowledge of ancient lore was almost certainly far more profound than we to-day can easily realise, referred to something of this when he wrote in 1 Cor. 10. 2 of Israel, passing through the Red Sea, being "*baptised unto Moses in the*

*cloud and in the sea*". That was not a baptism of cleansing; it was a baptism of separation, of dedication to the purposes of God that they might be a chosen people, a Royal Priesthood, ultimately to become an instrument in God's hand for the reconciliation of fallen man to Himself and the accomplishment of His purposes with them. To accomplish that end they must of necessity pass through the waters that separate between fallen man in a sinful world and the eternal life that can only be achieved in God's world.

Peter must have seen something of that when he likened Christian baptism to the historical incident of the Flood. In the days of the Ark, he says, a few were saved by water—were carried through the water and saved when all others perished—"the like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ". (1 Pet. 3. 21). He certainly did not mean that a literal plunging of ourselves into the literal baptismal font will save us as the Ark, floating on the waters of the Deluge, carried to safety those within it during that momentous twelve months. What he did mean, surely, was something very much akin to Paul's words about Israel's baptism in the Red Sea. Noah and his family were forever separated from an evil world, where sin reigned, by the waters of the Deluge, and they came forth into a new world which to them was a world of new and Divine life, a world where the Spirit of God could have full scope for the exercise of beneficent power and the righteous live according to the dictates of their own pious hearts with none to make them afraid. The fact that in after days the world relapsed again into evil does not spoil the picture of the new, renovated world into which Noah and his family entered when they emerged from the Ark, nor of the fact that we who by baptism are separated just as surely from a doomed and dying world come forth to a new order of things which is ultimately to become the "desire of all nations".

Now it is a rather remarkable fact that in the mythologies of the ancient people from whom Abraham came the present sinful world was considered to be separated from the original perfect and sinless world by water—a sea that was impassable to ordinary human beings and could only be crossed by the favour of the gods. What dim memory of some great historical fact is enshrined in that idea we shall probably never know, at least this side the Vail, but the vague outline of the belief remains and it has some bearing

upon our subject. In the Babylonian story of the Flood the patriarch Noan, for his piety, was carried across the sea and given a dwelling-place among the gods in the "glory land". Only the pure in heart and righteous of life could hope thus to traverse the waters and enter into eternal life. Even the evil spirits of the heavens could not cross them, but must forever remain with men in the world of sin (this is the belief that gave rise to the idea that the demons are unable to cross running water, a popular belief to which our Lord referred in Matt. 13. 43 when he said that the unclean spirit, cast out of a man, "walketh through *dry* places, seeking rest, and finding none"). In order to symbolise this separation between the worlds of evil and good there was, in the great Temple of Marduk at Babylon, a huge basin or tank of water, known as the "*apsu*" or "sea", and a ceremony very similar to the later washing of the Levitical priests was conducted there. As showing the similarity of ideas it is interesting again to note that the great Laver in Solomon's Temple is called in the Old Testament by this very name of "sea". (1 Kings 7. 23-44; 1 Chron. 4. 2-15). One of the oldest of Sumerian traditions tells how at the birth of Marduk or Bel, the god of Babylon, he was baptised in that "sea" and thereupon became the Redeemer of mankind. Sometimes those legends and mythologies have been dismissed as inventions of the Devil; what is far more likely is that they represent distorted memories of what were once, in dim antediluvian days, a tolerably clear understanding of the Divine purposes. It might well be that our first parents, during the centuries in which they lived and learned about God, were given some understanding that the promised Seed of whom God had spoken in the Garden must one day plunge beneath the waters of separation and of death that He might rise again in newness of life for the salvation of the world. There is some reason to believe that man's separation from Eden was brought about by the submersion of the Garden by the waters of the sea. That theme cannot be enlarged upon here, but if such should actually have been the case it becomes easier to understand why subsequent generations, as the world grew steadily older in sin and death, should look longingly back to that former golden age and wondrous garden from which the relentless sea had forever separated them, until the memory passed into a legend growing ever more dim with the passage of years. Logically, then, the only way back to the lost Paradise

would be by a passage through the sea, and that in turn would lead to the realisation that the One Who was at the end to be man's Redeemer must Himself pass through that sea, alone, and emerge triumphant on the other side.

There we have what may be the foundation of this second and so much more important aspect of baptism. We who are buried *with* Christ by baptism into His death are forever separated from the world and its aims and interests; we have elected to follow Christ whithersoever He may lead—and He leads into those symbolic waters and beneath those waters and then out of those waters into a new life. Like as Christ was raised from the dead, so we also rise to walk in newness of life. That new life is lived in this world, here and now, but because of that new life we are no longer of this world. We have become citizens of the perfect world, the Paradise of righteousness which lies beyond the waters, the Paradise to which all men will attain when at last the waters are done away—they in the earthly phase of that Paradise, and those who went through the waters in the spiritual, heavenly phase.

That then is the vision before us as we go down into the symbolic baptismal waters, when by the One Spirit we, individually, are baptised into the One Body (1 Cor. 12. 13). We, here, are still in the world of death and suffering and all manner of evil. Over there, on the other side of the water, there is the glorious world of the future, Eden restored, the River of Life and the Trees of Life, and the Holy City, New Jerusalem, waiting to come down from God to man. But Eden cannot be restored to man, much as man needs it and, maybe, longs for it, until Christ's consecrated followers have followed Him into those waters and been planted together in the likeness of His death. Only then can they emerge also in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6. 5). The world must wait until that has become an accomplished fact and the consecration of earthly life which is the real baptism has been consummated in actual death of the human frame and a glorious resurrection to spiritual being. "*We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*" (1 John 3. 2). Until then "the earnest expectation of the creation *waiteth* for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8. 19). The measure of our desire to see evil brought to an end and all mankind ushered into everlasting happiness, and God's will done on earth as in heaven, will be revealed by the whole-heartedness with which

we present our own selves in absolute dedication of self and consecration of life to our Heavenly Father, willingly accepting whatever in His providence is to be our experience in life, and seeking in every possible manner to be so fashioned and moulded by the all-powerful Holy Spirit of God that we shall ultimately become vessels fitted for His future purposes.

It is after consecration has become an established thing with us that we enter into the third aspect of baptism. The true baptism is not only cleansing; it is not only separation to holy things; it is also an entry into suffering. Suffering is an essential factor in the Divine Plan. We may not know—we do not know—just why that is so and just what redemptive or reformatory power is inherent in suffering, but the Scriptures show clearly that it is so. Our Lord's death on the Cross provided the Ransom for man, but His life of suffering was the offering for sin by means of which man will ultimately be reconciled to God. Both are necessary in the Divine Plan. And with those who are Christ's consecrated followers, seeking to become joint-heirs with Him of the Kingdom and associated with Him as His "Bride" in the glory of all future ages, the fact that they are dead to the world and are ready to lay down life itself for the Lord and the Truth is not the only fruit of their lives that God can use for the salvation of mankind. He can, and will, also use the fruit of every act of sacrifice and every pang of suffering that there has been throughout those consecrated lives. We realise, and say, at times, that suffering and sacrifice plays an important part in the development of character. Perhaps we could never approach conformity to the Divine likeness without it. We do know that our Lord was made perfect through suffering, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Therefore our baptism is, beside a baptism of cleansing and a baptism of separation, a baptism of suffering. It was so with Jesus. "I have a baptism to be baptised with" He said "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." (Luke 12. 50). When the mother of Zebedee's children, John and James, asked that her sons be given the chief places of honour in the Kingdom, Jesus asked them if they were able to be baptised with the baptism that He was baptised with. They assured Him that they were able. What innocent confidence they had, knowing not what the future held for them of suffering and persecution and death! Jesus knew. "Ye shall indeed be baptised with the baptism that

I am baptised with." Perhaps he knew also that they would be faithful and come through triumphant at the end. In after days they must often have thought of their early joyous ignorance.

So it is with us. We enter the Narrow Way full of confidence—perhaps we think of our baptism principally as a cleansing; that it is also going to mean separation we see to some extent; that it will additionally involve suffering we see not at all. The revelation comes later, when we are becoming progressively stronger and more able to bear it. If then, when the trials of the way are more than usually oppressive, and affliction more than usually difficult to bear, the darkness seems to have overcome the light, and the things of this world to be overpowering the things of the Spirit, then is the time to remember that we who have entered the waters of baptism are half-way through to the glory land on the other side. We are in process of being buried with Him by baptism into His death, and the process in its working out may be a painful one at times—but we shall rise again, and when we do rise again it will be in the likeness of His resurrection. "I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." (Psa. 17. 15).

Cleansing—separation—suffering; thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. How can we hold back longer from yielding "our reasonable service"? "I beseech you, therefore, brethren" pleads the great Apostle "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds . . ." (Rom. 12. 1-2). Will we not answer his plea with a joyous assent and a willing coming to God in full surrender?

What of the symbol? What of the simple, eloquent ceremony in which the believer, heart full of love to his Lord, testifies before his brethren of the decision that has already been taken and the consecration of life that has already been made, it may have been, a considerable time ago, within the privacy of the heart and mind? Our Master surely knew that some great value lies in this joyful ritual, some great blessing for the one thus symbolising his or her consecration. The fact that He Himself insisted upon leading the way for all His disciples in going down into the literal waters is surely evidence enough for that! So too, when about to leave them, He bade them go forth and teach all nations, baptising in

the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28. 19-20). The Book of Acts offers abundant testimony that the Apostles interpreted that instruction very literally and obeyed it very wholeheartedly, and the Church throughout all subsequent ages has done the same. Whatever may be our feelings as to the value and usefulness of ceremony and ritual, or whatever the reason that may tend to deter from the outward symbolic performance of a rite that testifies to the inward surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ that has already taken place, do not let us allow them to silence the gentle, compelling tones of the One we love and serve. "Nevertheless suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He knows, better than we can ever hope to do, what source of strength, what stabilising and sustaining influence, the memory of that little

ceremony may become to us in some dark or stressful experience of life that may still lie ahead of us, in the unknown future.

"See, here is water" said the Ethiopian eunuch after Philip had expounded the words of life and opened his eyes. "What doth hinder me to be baptised?"

"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." . . .

"And he went on his way rejoicing!"

So may we, having understood and experienced the true baptism of consecration to God and burial into the death of Christ, follow that surrender with an outward testimony to our brethren—and to our Lord—in the fashion hallowed by Jesus Himself, thus setting our feet firmly and straightly on the road that leads to the Kingdom, and going on our way . . . rejoicing!

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## WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS

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An Easter  
meditation

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities." (Isa. 53. 5 and 11).

The great depth of our Redeemer's love for mankind is nowhere more eloquently expressed than in this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Too often do we take the surface meaning of the well-known words and content ourselves with the thought that Jesus has taken the sinner's place and accepted in His own person the penalty of sin which should rightfully come upon guilty man. Too often do we sing—

*"Christ gave His life for me  
His precious blood was shed  
That I might ransomed be  
And quickened from the dead."*

and accept the matter as settled without need of any further realisation of what the death of Jesus really means to us.

There is so much more in the doctrine of the Ransom than the acceptance of Paul's words regarding the *anti-lutron*—the purchase of all the human race by Jesus at the cost of His own human life. Isaiah 53 tells how intimately the story of the Ransom is bound up with the "suffering servant" of whom the prophet speaks so eloquently. From the twenty-second chapter, where Jehovah's "servant" is first

mentioned, the theme is developed until it reaches its climax in the fifty-third chapter. Man can only be redeemed and reconciled to God by means of one who would be prepared to "suffer" in order that the compelling power of that suffering might lead men to the only course of life which can bring them happiness and the purging of their sins. The old law of Israel was "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth". That law is still the principle upon which nations and systems are founded today, and which leads to strife, violence, war and death. Isaiah was used by the Holy Spirit to introduce a new theme to man, a theme which must be put into practice amongst men before the troubles of this world can be solved. There must be one, whether man amongst men or nation amongst nations, willing to become a servant instead of an oppressor, seeking to do good to men by serving them instead of oppressing men by ruling over them; one willing to suffer in his service that others may be glad, rather than be an exactor of suffering from others in retribution for their faults; one that will eventually *win* men by love, instead of *compelling* men by force. That is the ideal which God has planned, the principle upon which the work of the Kingdom Age will be carried on, the principle which accomplishes the work of the Good

Shepherd amongst His own sheep during this Age, and the principle which Isaiah declared would be exemplified by "He that shall come".

So Christ came as a "suffering servant". He said so Himself. "*I am among you as one that serveth.*" "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10. 45). "He gave Himself a Ransom" (1 Tim. 2. 5), and He was also a "sin-offering"—an offering on account of sin. The blood of bulls and goats can never take away sin, yea, and neither does the blood of Christ remove sin, *unless* the sinner, passing through the successive stages of repentance, faith and justification, takes to himself the benefit of that offering made "once and for all" and in whole-hearted surrender to the saving power of Jesus becomes reconciled to God.

The power of the sin-offering, then, lies in its compelling force, drawing men first to an appreciation of what Christ has done for them, secondly to remorse for their sinful condition and repentance for their sin, thirdly to faith that the work and sacrifice of Christ can be efficacious on their behalf and upon their acceptance of Him as their Saviour, and finally sincere acceptance of Him and consecration to His service. Not until any man has accepted the Law of Love as the guiding principle in his life, is wholly devoted to the service of his fellows even at the cost of suffering to himself were that necessary, is prepared to be servant of all if by any means he may save some, can he even commence in the way that culminates in eternal life.

Men in Isaiah's day did not realise that to be the only way. Neither did they at the First Advent. Neither do they now. Because of their lack of understanding, it was necessary that there be a great Exemplar to show them the way by walking in it Himself. So the prophet cries: "He was wounded *for* (on account of)

our transgressions. He was bruised *for* (on account of) our iniquities. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many *on whose account* he shall bear iniquity."

Rotherham says:

*"He was pierced for transgressions that were ours,  
Was crushed for iniquities that were ours.  
The chastisement for our well-being was upon him,  
And by his stripes there is healing for us."*  
and the Septuagint renders vs. 5 and 8:

*"He was wounded on account of our sins  
and was bruised because of our iniquities  
... Because of the iniquities of my people  
he was led to death."*

Is it not true that Christ's footstep followers, the Church of this Age, are associated with Him in this great thing? Consecrated Christians now, buried with Him by baptism into His death, suffering with Him, are also "suffering servants", seeking nothing better than to serve mankind in the good things of God which shall be for their salvation. This course in life brings suffering now, a suffering gladly borne, because it is pointing the whole world to the only way by which it will eventually attain its destiny. We suffer, not "for" the sins of the people in the ordinarily accepted sense of that word, but most certainly "on account of" the sins of the people—for were there no sin in the world there would be no suffering for righteousness' sake, and no necessity for it. Thus we may rejoice, knowing that our suffering is working out, not only a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory for us, but salvation for all the world, "in due time".

*"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."*

*"In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

### A NOTE ON MATT. 3. 4.

John the Baptist is said in Matt. 3. 4 to have lived on "locusts and wild honey". The locusts were not the insects of that name, but the long, sweet pods of the carob or locust tree, pods which are full of tiny chocolate coloured seeds. A carob tree now in the Jerusalem Forest and reputed to be more than two thousand years old still bears masses of this fruit.

In mediæval times these tiny seeds were used by silversmiths and jewellers for measuring the weight of jewels. A silversmith's dram was equal to sixteen carob seeds.

European craftsmanship in precious metals and jewels was derived from the Arabic peoples of the Middle East, and the seeds used as weights were known by their Arabic name of *Qirat*. This word became transliterated into English as carat, to this day the measure by which the weight of diamonds is denoted. The modern diamond dealer therefore uses in his trade a term directly derived from the fruit which formed the staple diet of John the Baptist.

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## **GOD SPEAKS!**

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*A brief glance at the  
Book of Hebrews*

God speaks! So begins the epistle to the Hebrews; and without the customary apostolic greeting: and properly so, for the writer's qualifications and his blessing on his readers must be left unmentioned while God is speaking. He speaks to a people whose first great leader exceedingly feared and quaked when the voice of God once shook the earth, and from whose ranks arose those mighty men of word and deed of whom the world was not worthy. He speaks to a people who had heard His voice through many centuries; to a nation which could rightly claim that to them were committed the oracles. The olden prophecies had not come by the will of man for often the will of man was contrary, nor did the prophets proclaim together, but spoke at sundry times when the burden of the Lord was upon them. Being of Adamic descent they died like their hearers; yet their words have not died, and they still speak to those who listen, and appropriate quotations are made in this epistle from their writings. And the passage of time has by fulfilment of their prophecies revealed that for all their frailty they are truthfully referred to as holy men of God who spake as moved by the Holy Spirit.

But a great change of procedure is announced at the opening of this epistle. God is speaking again, and the new channel of truth is the greatest He could desire or find, or man need. We all know through whom He now speaks, but as the apostle, apart from speaking of Him as the Son of God, does not immediately announce His name. He first mentions some of His glories and greatness, and when he has thus prepared the minds of his Hebrew readers, he declares Him, in chapter two, to be Jesus. He is not of sinful stock as the early prophets, yet his words do not abrogate the prophecies of his predecessors, for all spoke by the Spirit's direction. But this will emerge from the comparison—that if God had of old spoken through the faithful several and is now speaking through one, His Son, then He must possess outstanding qualifications and virtues. He has; and the first seven chapters of Hebrews tell, among other things, how much better, how much greater is this faithful and true witness than the stalwarts of the past. And note how, in those chapters, the faithful servants of old (the very ones revered in Israel) are one by one surpassed by Jesus the

Son of God.

Early in the first chapter we see the close association of the Son and His Father, so complete that He is spoken of as the reflection of the power, the character, the voice of God. But there are two facts in which the Son must necessarily differ from the Father, yet they also prove how glorious is the union of Father and Son, and they are that it is the Son who by himself purges our sin, and having done that great work sits down on the right hand of the majesty on high. This is the channel through whom the message of God now comes, and it will be noticed that this new prophet is also priest and king. And he excels all previous holders of these offices in that He possesses the power of an endless life, enough to fit Him for all Israel's and the world's many needs. That he holds this immortality is seen in this chapter by his gaining by inheritance a more excellent name than the angels.

The remainder of the first chapter has as its theme the proving of the Son's superiority to the angels, and ample quotation is given from the voices of the past, which look forward to His coming and faithful performance of His Divine mission; and these in turn seal the old writers as prophets of God. The apostle propounds the question—to which of the angels said he at any time, "thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee." No answer is given, for there is none. His superiority to angels is so marked that the apostle uses that strong figure of speech—erotesis—where the unanswered question is more telling than any reply. Further quotations show the Son's work in the beginning of laying the foundations of the universe. Some of the work erected on those foundations will perish, but the founder will endure and bear a righteous sceptre in the coming kingdom.

Not to angels is assigned the great work of subduing the future habitable, affirms chapter two, yet it reasons that if the word once spoken by angels was accompanied by severe penalties we ought to give more earnest heed to the words which first began to be spoken by this new voice of God, which God himself has confirmed by gifts of the Holy Spirit. Great indeed must be the responsibility of the hearers now that the last and greatest voice from God is speaking! And, leaving the subject of angels, the apostle mentions the

superiority of the Son to man. This may be an obvious truth, yet if we recall that the Son was once of high heavenly rank and became a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, or in other words that he might redeem man by dying for them, then his superiority to man can never be called in question. And his superiority to the Devil is apparent, for by the same act of death He will render him powerless.

And then the comparison changes. Though superior to angels and man in general, He is shown as better than man in particular from chapter three forward; and the first great man in the list of worthies is Moses, one of the faithful voices of the past. It will be remembered that Moses the servant of God and of Israel the house of God, prophesied that he himself would be succeeded by another to whom they would hearken without fail; and thus he became a testimony or illustration of those things which were to be spoken after concerning Jesus the Son. But though Moses heard the voice of God and faithfully served the words to Israel, it was necessary for the house of God to be constantly prompted to loyalty by the insistent words, "To-day if ye will hear his voice." And all know that the word preached did not profit, for it was not mixed with faith in them that heard. Then the apostle mentions two more leaders in Israel, Joshua and David; yet both failed to give rest to Israel. The word of God had come to Israel through such as these at sundry times and in divers manners with but little result, and the word of God being quick and powerful spoke again and said, "They shall not enter into my rest".

It will then be reasoned that now that God is speaking by his Son, who surpasses Moses, Joshua and David, we ought to give the more earnest heed. It is as though the writer was saying, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, and how shall we escape if we neglect?" Yet, the warning notes of chapters three and four are tempered by the announcement of the new voice of God being a faithful high priest Who was, apart from sin, tempted in all points like as we. So we may come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help. But we must listen to the voice.

The mention of high priest will remind the Hebrews of the first and greatest, Aaron. He did not take the honour to himself, but was specially called for the post, as was Moses called to his service. In fact, each of these leaders of old time was called to his service,

and it was proper that Israel should heed them in those days when they spoke from God; but their superior has come, the princely leader of salvation, the Son, and they must listen to Him. They had looked on Aaron as model high priest even as they saw Moses as the great prophet, but both are succeeded by One, in whom combines each office held by Moses, Aaron, Joshua and David. When the apostle has compared one by one the leaders of the past with their one successor they must perforce accept Messiah. Again the writer points out their responsibility (in chapter 6), but again he has comforting words to speak, for he is persuaded better things of them, even though he must speak strongly.

There seems to be only one more name in Israel to which they would cling now that each of their leaders has been superseded by Jesus, and he is the father of them all and in whom inhere the promises—Abraham. And, as we expect, the apostle shows how he too is superseded by the same one. None of them are superseded in the sense that they have been discarded by God, but the new channel of God's word and promise and deed is so much better than they, great though they were, and most worthy to be revered in Israel. Abraham received blessing from one of unknown descent and whose appointment as high priest came not in the fashion that Israel was accustomed to. Abraham gave him tithes in acknowledgment of his honour. Consider how great this man was, for he was made like unto the Son of God and he received tithes of Abraham and therefore of Levi and the whole house of Aaron, who in their turn received tithes of all Israel. Of such rank is Jesus the Son of God.

The apostle begins the eighth chapter as though the previous seven chapters are given to describing the glories of this One high Priest, for he says, "Of the things we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest", greater than angels, than man, than Moses, than Joshua, than David, than Aaron, and greater than Abraham. He it is through whom God now speaks, and we must give heed, for no better can ever be found.

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"Beware of much talk; remain in some secret place and enjoy thy God; for thou hast him whom all the world cannot take from thee. I am He to whom thou oughtest wholly to give thyself up, that so thou mayest live the rest of thy time, not in thyself but in Me and be free from all anxious cares."

—(Thomas a Kempis, 1380-1471).

## MAN FROM MACEDONIA

No. 9 in a series of  
stories of St. Paul

It could hardly have been more than twelve months after the momentous Jerusalem conference, recorded in Acts 15 that Paul felt the old urge to be up and away again on a missionary expedition. Since returning from Jerusalem both he and Barnabas had resumed their normal places of ministry in the Antioch Church, fortified and assisted by the devotion of Silas, who had now apparently decided to sever his connection with Jerusalem and make Antioch his home town and church. Perhaps there was more activity there and greater openings for the service he wanted to render. Acts 15. 35 makes it clear that the church continued in a spiritually healthy state; "*Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also*". There must have been a considerable work of evangelical witness carried on in the surrounding territory, not recorded in Acts because not directly associated with the wider work of Paul himself, nevertheless work in which he must have collaborated with his fellow-elders. Now the time had come, he probably thought, when he could leave that work to the others and go again over the ground he and Barnabas had traversed some eight years before—Cyprus, Perga, Iconium, Lystra—and satisfy themselves as to the spiritual condition of the converts they had made and the churches they had formed, and confirm them in the faith.

So Paul put the matter to his colleague. Barnabas was very willing. He, too, evidently felt the need and desirability of such an expedition. In all good faith, and not anticipating any demur, he proposed that John Mark should accompany them as general assistant. Probably to his complete surprise, Paul violently opposed the suggestion. Mark, he pointed out, had deserted them halfway through the previous journey and gone home to Jerusalem. He was not going to risk anything like that again. Regrettable though it may be to admit the fact, there is no doubt that this difference of opinion led to a violent quarrel between the two. "*The contention was so sharp between them . . .*" is Luke's expression, where the word is "*paroxysmos*", indicating a short and sharp but very extreme outburst of feeling. There is certainly no indication that the guidance of the Holy Spirit was sought or obtained on the matter, no record that resource was had to prayer that

the will of the Lord might be discerned. Just for the moment, saints though they were, the old nature came to the top and neither would give way. Barnabas was determined that Mark should go; Paul equally determined that he should not.

It is difficult at this end of the Age, with only the brief account in Acts before us, to arrive at any conclusion as to who was in the right. John Mark was now a mature man of about thirty four. He was evidently in full fellowship and service with the Antioch Church. The reason for his earlier defection is unknown, but the fact that he returned to Jerusalem and not Antioch, and that afterwards he is found again at Antioch, does point to the likelihood that his object was to be with his mother Mary at a time when the Jerusalem Christians were undergoing severe persecution. If that is the true hypothesis then it would seem that Paul was being a bit hard on the younger man on this occasion. In later years he did reconsider his attitude and expressed his appreciation and esteem for Mark, asking Timothy to bring him to Rome "*for he is profitable to me for the ministry*" (2 Tim. 4. 11). At this moment, however, Paul would have none of him, and Barnabas proving obdurate, the friends parted, each to undertake a missionary journey on his own account.

Probably by agreement, Barnabas, accompanied by Mark, went to Cyprus, where the first missionary journey had commenced. The Book of Acts is silent as to their labours after this, but from one or two scattered allusions in other New Testament books it seems possible that after visiting Cyprus they went on into Bithynia, Pontus, Cappadocia—all provinces of Asia, and territory in which later on the Holy Spirit did not allow Paul to minister. Paul took the remainder of the territory they had covered eight years earlier.

Bereft of his erstwhile co-worker and travelling companion, Paul looked around for a successor. His choice fell upon Silas, a man who had by now proved himself at Antioch. Viewed in the light of later events, the entire episode perhaps was Divinely overruled, for Silas, like Paul himself but unlike Barnabas, was a Roman citizen. That was an advantage on this journey, for although at this moment Paul was unaware of the fact, he was destined this time to leave Asia and cross over into

Greece, where the influence of Rome was stronger, and the fact of citizenship more important.

So Paul set out on his second missionary journey. He was now about fifty years of age; already two-thirds of his Christian life was over. He intended this expedition to cover more ground than the previous one; perhaps the hope of one day seeing Rome itself and preaching the Gospel in the capital city of the empire was already taking root in his mind. The two men struck out northward, visiting and confirming the companies of Christians scattered throughout Cyria and Cilicia. All this was home territory; here the Antioch church had sown the seed and was ministering continually. It was after Paul had passed through his own native city of Tarsus in Cilicia and crossed the high mountains behind the city that his journey began in earnest.

Approaching the Asiatic provinces from this direction he came upon the scenes of his former labours in reverse, arriving first at Derbe, the last call of his first journey, and next at Lystra. And here an occasion of great joy was experienced by the Apostle. Eight years previously he had left a few new converts in this place to form their own little assembly and continue as best they could in the faith he had so little time to expound to them. Now he found a thriving Christian community and among them a young man named Timothy who was to become one of the most devoted of Paul's fellow-labourers, as personally dear to him as though in fact his own son. "*My son Timothy . . .*" How often the Apostle's pen lingered over the beloved name when he wrote his epistles to the churches. The last words we have, written in the shadow of death, were to this young convert, expressive of his own faith and conviction after a lifetime of service. "*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand . . . I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded . . .*" So Timothy, at the older man's earnest request, threw in his lot with Paul and set out with him and with Silas when they resumed their travels.

No one really knows the truth about the next stage of the journey. They must have passed through Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia and visited the believers who had been converted on the first journey; then comes that rather obscure statement in Acts 16. 6 "*Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia after they were come to Mysia,*

*they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not*". Here is a record of apparent frustration, of an attempt to preach which was prevented by the closing of the door of opportunity. No names of towns are given, no indication that in this long trek of at least seven hundred miles through the central districts of Rome's Asiatic empire the missionaries found any hearing ear or left behind them any converts. So far as the record in the Book of Acts is concerned, the trip through Phrygia and Galatia was unproductive of any good work. But there is one clue elsewhere. When Paul sat down one day in Corinth, some five or six years later, to write his Epistle to the Galatians he referred to the time he first came among them and to some sickness or malady with which he was then afflicted. "*Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first, and my trial which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ . . . I bear you record that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me*". (Gal. 4. 13-15). Now this could only have taken place during this second missionary journey of St. Paul. Although unrecorded in Acts, it seems clear that Paul and Silas did meet with considerable success in Galatia, and that Paul was stricken with some kind of severe illness—the reference to the Galatians "plucking out their own eyes" seems to point to an acute attack of the glaucoma from which it is believed the Apostle suffered—and that some very exceptional manifestations of love and care were displayed by the new converts whilst he was in their midst. The warmth of affection which Paul displayed for the Galatian brethren does seem to indicate that he cherished very happy recollections of his ministry among them.

But the Spirit was hasting him on. Great events were ahead; a new field of labour was to be opened up and the Apostle to the Gentiles must linger no longer in Asia. Travelling eastwards through Mysia they tried to turn southward into the province known to the Romans as Asia proper, the district where very soon now were to be established the famous "seven churches of Asia" of the Book of Revelation. The Spirit restrained them; were forbidden" is the expression, where "forbidden" is the word "*kolasin*", meaning a restraint as a horse is pulled up by his bridle. Baulked at this, the travellers turned northward toward Bithynia on the Black Sea coast;

the Spirit "suffered them not", where the words have the meaning of "permitted them not". There was only one way left to go; they must continue in an easterly direction and that would bring them to the coast of the Aegean Sea and the seaport of Troas; and on the other side of that sea lay the land of Greece and the continent of Europe.

Perhaps they remained at Troas for a little while, waiting the leading of the Spirit. Certain it is that they found a number of hearing ears in this busy mercantile town, for when Paul came back to Troas some four years later he preached to a gathering of the believers. At this present time he also met the man who was to be his constant companion and friend, destined to become the historian of the Apostolic Church, the Greek physician Luke.

It has been surmised that Luke was a native of Paul's own city, Antioch, and that the two men had met before. This is not definitely known. What is certain is that at this time Luke made open profession of Christianity and attached himself to the little party of missionaries. He was not an evangelist and not a preacher; his talent lay in writing. The fruit of his flair for noticing events and eliciting facts, and his masterly style in putting them together in vividly dramatic style, remain with us in the Book of Acts and the Gospel according to St. Luke. The New Testament has been immeasurably enriched by the labours of this Gentile convert who so willingly sacrificed the honours and profits his undoubted talents could have won him in the world of men, and gave himself freely and spontaneously to the cause of Christ.

The party was now complete. Two zealous missionaries, one enthusiastic youth, and one middle aged professional man, consciously associated under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, ready for whatever work the Spirit might direct. Almost certainly there must have been much earnest discussion and prayer, and a conviction that very soon the obstacles and frustration of effort would be at an end and one clearly defined pathway revealed along which they must go.

In such circumstances it is not surprising that Paul saw a vision, or it might have been a dream; it matters not. It was during the night, perhaps after a day of discussion and prayer for guidance. He saw a man, a Greek, a man of Macedonia, the district of Greece which lay immediately opposite Troas, two hundred miles or so across the sea. He heard the man speak. It was an appeal. "Come over

into Macedonia and help us." Paul came back to the waking world with the impact of that appeal still upon him. Was this the leading of the Spirit, the guidance for which they all had been waiting. It is evident that he must have lost no time in talking the thing over with Silas and Timothy and Luke, and equally obvious that none of them entertained any doubt about the matter. "*Immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them*" (Acts 16. 10).

The next few verses tell how, loosing from Troas, they sailed by the little island of Samothrace and a day later arrived at the Greek port of Neapolis. From thence it was only a few miles to Philippi and before long the four men were treading the streets of that important centre and doubtless wondering how best to commence their mission. There does not seem to have been a Jewish synagogue in the city; adherents of the Jewish faith appear to have been few, so that it was not until the next Sabbath that Paul and his companions tracked down a few of like mind who were in the habit of meeting by the side of the river outside the city for prayer. Even so a Gentile was the first notable convert. Lydia, a woman of Thyatira on the opposite mainland, apparently resident in Philippi for business reasons, one "which worshipped God"—a phrase normally indicating a non-Jewish believer—was probably Greek, perhaps Roman. Evidently a woman of decisive character and natural nobility she quickly accepted the faith, was baptised, and promptly offered the hospitality of her home to the missionaries. There they stayed whilst in Philippi and there the Christian community which was the first fruit of the Apostle's labours in Greece began to meet in fellowship.

It was at Philippi, probably after several weeks residence and ministry, that there occurred the incident of the demon obsessed slave girl, an affair which landed Paul and Silas in jail and led to the conversion of the Philippian jailer. This unfortunate girl was "*possessed with a spirit of Python*" (A.V. Margin "*pneuma pythonos*"). In the city of Delphi, not far from Athens, there stood the Temple of Apollo, within the precincts of which was a famous Oracle. The priestess of Apollo, known as the Pythia, presided over the Oracle and upon being approached by an enquirer after the future would fall into a frenzy of demon obsession and with foaming at the mouth, shrieks and gesticulations give a cryptic reply within which was contained

the alleged answer to the question. There were lesser oracles in other parts of Greece where the presiding priestess behaved in similar fashion. The reference to this slave girl being possessed by a Pythian spirit is evidence that she attracted attention by displaying a similar kind of behaviour in public and thereby gained notoriety by reason of her declarations. As a slave girl her earnings were the property of her owners and a very lucrative business they evidently found it to be, judging by their chagrin when Paul put a peremptory stop to the whole thing. "*These men are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.*" That was the cry which fell upon the ears of Paul and Silas every time they encountered this poor demented girl in the street. It was a witness to the cause of Christ, but from a source which Paul could not allow. The Christian Gospel was not to be associated with the frenzied ravings and distraught acts characteristic of pagan idolatry. The situation had to be brought to an end; the mental agony of the unfortunate victim must be terminated. Turning abruptly upon the girl and her owners, and in full sight of the gapp-

ing crowd, Paul sternly commanded the obsessing spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her. "*And he came out immediately.*"

This act of healing is on a level with similar cases when Jesus cast out demons and their victims were restored to their right minds. Never again was this slave girl to mystify and entertain the thoughtless crowds of Philippi with her cryptic utterances. Whether or not she became a disciple after this experience is not known: suffice it that once again the saving and healing power of Jesus Christ was made manifest in a spectacular fashion to those who as yet knew Him not. The handful of believers in Philippi must have had their faith strengthened in consequence, and rendered praise to God. But the owners of the slave did not. The source of their profit was gone. The value of their slave was destroyed in a moment by these interfering Jews. Determined to have their revenge, they laid hold on Paul and Silas and hurried them before the civil authorities. The episode of the Philippian jailer was the result.

(To be continued)

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## APATHETIC CHRISTIANS

The rector of St. Edmund's, Salisbury, some years ago described "wheeled Christians". Said he "*they come to church for the first time in their perambulators, for the second time in their wedding car, and for the third and last occasion in a hearse. How much happier would people be if they came on their own two feet in between times*". True enough! We are reminded of the somewhat similar observation which first appeared in print many years ago under the caption "*Four kinds of Christians*". First there is the *tired* Christian. He is active enough in theory but the enthusiasm vanishes when there is work to be done. Then there is the *retired* Christian. He was a good worker once, but that was a long time ago. Next comes the *rubber tyred* Christian, all right if the way is straight and the road is smooth. Finally, the *flat tyred* Christian. He ran well until he suffered a puncture and since then he has never recov-

ered his wind.

On the other hand there is something to be said in the defence of people who find "going to Church" not the most inspiring of exercises. Rowntree and Laver, in their social survey "*English Life and Leisure*" mentioned the young girl they interviewed who had made an attempt to attend Church but had given it up. "It was all bobbing up and down and I couldn't find the place in the book." Somehow there is something pathetic in the thought of that lassie wrestling manfully with the Book of Common Prayer, casting covert glances the while at her neighbours in the endeavour to kneel, stand and sit in tolerable unison with them. . . . At which point it is time for us to stop smiling and ask ourselves why is it that we likewise fail so often to hold newcomers to our meetings. It is not the fault of the faith; it is not that we lack enthusiasm or desire; then what is it?



Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

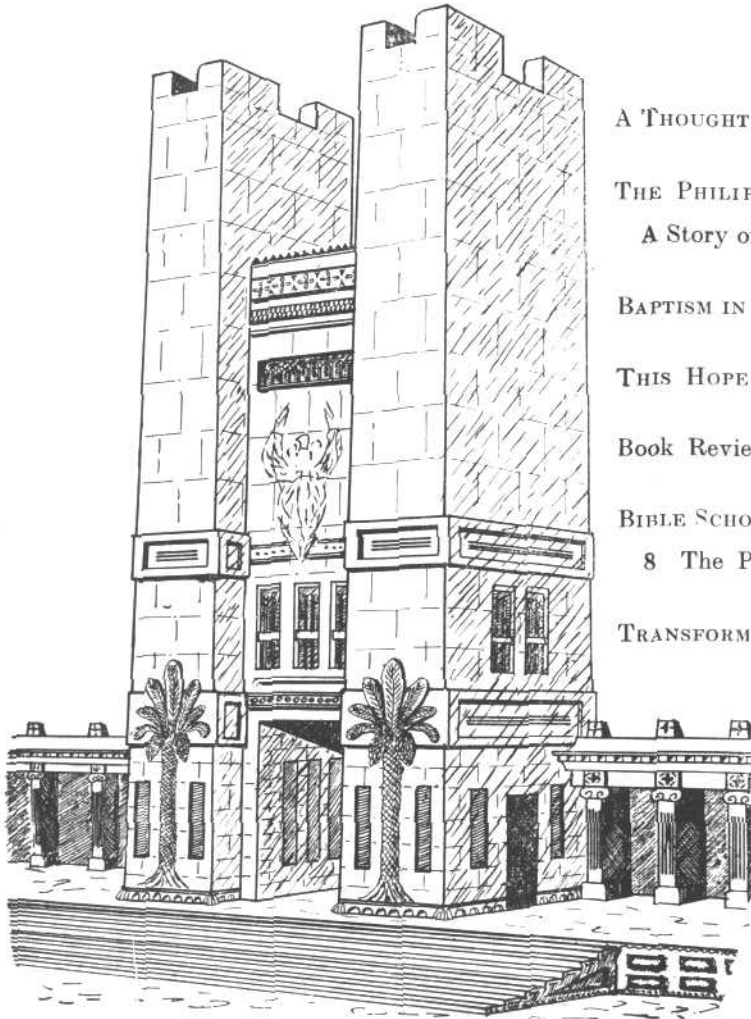
# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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### A Thought for the Month

Russia has set up a scientific research centre for the discovery of the secret of everlasting life. It was inevitable, perhaps, that the scientists of the world should eventually turn their attention in this direction but that Russia, which officially disclaims any adherence to the aims and ideals of Christianity, should be first to establish a formal organisation for the attainment of that which is the hope of every Christian is perhaps rather ironical. Dr. Merkulov, who is the Head of the new Faculty of Immortality in Moscow, is of the opinion that there is now no reason why the secret of prolonging human life for centuries should not soon be discovered. His plan is to find what chemical substances, introduced into the body, will react so as to slow up or interrupt the process of ageing and ultimate death. In this endeavour he is not alone. Research workers in several countries are working along similar lines. In Canada Dr. Selye has produced striking results in experiments with animals which go to show that by controlling the calcium content of the body old age can be either accelerated or retarded. The Russian professor, however, is looking beyond the use of chemicals and talks of electronic aids to make good the defective and dying organs of the body. Lest we should be tempted to dismiss this with a smile of incredulity let it be remembered that the Russians have quite recently demonstrated artificial limbs operated by means of electronic devices which receive their electrical impulses from the brain of the person using the limb, so that it obeys the will like a real one. When things like this become reality it is only to be expected that men not instructed in or familiar with the Christian faith should conclude that in process of time the scientists will be able to make men live for ever.

Provided, of course, that certain other discoveries of those same scientists do not result first in the destruction of all that is on our planet in a series of nuclear explosions.

It is not wise to dismiss such efforts with a hoot of derision. After all, the scientific men

of this world have done marvellously well in controlling the powers of nature for the use of man, even if at the time of writing it still remains an open question from the human standpoint whether the end of it all is not going to be one big bang, and then nature is supreme again. (From the Divine standpoint the case is different. He that sitteth in the heavens will certainly intervene before the iniquity of man goes too far). The basic assumption which provides the incentive for these researches is that ageing and death is the natural thing in man, a normal condition of material existence, and that it should be capable of delay or avoidance by suitable control over specified natural processes. This assumption is incorrect. Not even all Christians realise this. Death, so far as man is concerned, is an unnatural thing and is the consequence of disharmony with the Divine creative order. Man was designed for life, to live everlastingly under the conditions framed for him. The Christian faith requires us to believe that man's life comes from God and subsists in God, and can continue everlastingly only while man is in union with God. The first man Adam was originally thus in union but he severed the link when sin came into the world. According to Genesis he managed to keep a semblance of life in his body for nine hundred and thirty years but eventually he died. So have all men since, most of them in much less than nine hundred and thirty years. Words of the Psalmist are burningly true "They that trust in their wealth and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother . . . that he should still live for ever and not see corruption" (Psa. 49. 7-9). The life of man is independent of this present body or this material world because it is in the hand of God; it can be conscious of itself in any body or any sphere of being in which it pleases God to place it. But only God can grant it or continue it. The scientists, one day, will discover that too.

## THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER

No. 10 in a series of  
stories of St. Paul

No one really knew what had happened. The two Jews were being dragged through the streets toward the *Agora*, the place where the *Duumvirii*, dispensers of justice and custodians of law and order, administered the duties of their office. Alert for any opportunity of creating a tumult, especially against the hated Jews, all the riff-raff of Philippi followed hard behind. Something to do with a slave girl, someone had said. By means of magical arts these Jews had deprived her of her gift of prophecy and now her masters were laying a complaint at court. Should be worth seeing, this affair! Philippi was a Roman military centre; much of the population was descended from Roman soldiers settled here after a disastrous battle fought near by between Imperial and Republican forces during the civil war half a century earlier. The *duumvirii* themselves were ex-military men who had assumed without any authority the Roman military title *Praetor*—which is why St. Luke used the equivalent Greek term *strategos*, rendered in the A.V. "magistrates"—and they could be relied on to see that these interfering Jews were taught a good sharp lesson for their pains. So the yelling mob surged on, crowding round the aggrieved complainants and their prisoners, as the *aediles* in the forecourt of the buildings listened impassively to the story.

Paul and Silas were probably taken by surprise at this sudden outburst of animosity. It is probable that Paul performed this act of healing in a sudden accession of pity for the unfortunate girl who for so many days past had been calling after him as he moved about the city "*These men are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.*" He had so far experienced no opposition to his message; the citizens of Philippi either listened to him or ignored him but they did not oppose him. The few Jews who were resident in the city appeared to appreciate his ministry and there had been no opposition from that direction either. It seemed almost as if here, at last, he had found a place where he could preach Christ undisturbed. His healing of the lame man at Lystra had evoked the unrestrained admiration of the people there so that he even had to restrain them from worshipping him as a god. He probably expected now that his dispos-

sessing of the demoniac spirit from this girl would at the very least create increased interest in his message and the Lord by whose power he had performed this act. He under-estimated the measure of the forces against him. It was almost as if the evil spirit, having been cast out of the slave girl, had entered into her owners and turned them into furious, raving beasts. Almost before they realised what was happening, the two apostles found themselves arraigned before the bar of Roman justice. The *aediles*—rendered "rulers" in Acts 16-19, were a kind of civil police, responsible for the maintenance of order in temples, public buildings, streets and open spaces, and for the apprehension of offenders against the law. The *duumvirii*—"magistrates" of 16-20—always two in number, corresponded roughly to our own Justices of the Peace with rather more authority than Britain's local magistrates usually enjoy, more like that of a Criminal Court Judge at the County Assizes. In accordance with Roman custom, the proceedings were held in public, probably in the open air, with the unruly crowd pressing close on all sides and only with difficulty held back by the attendant guards. In the normal case a Roman trial was conducted with dignity and some semblance of justice; the presiding judge would enquire the nature of the charge and the complainant was then free to state his case. The impression one gets here is that the aggrieved slave owners poured out their story before the usual opening formalities could be gone through, and it is significant that the charge they brought bore no relation whatever to the incident which inspired it. The reason is not difficult to discern. It was no crime under Roman law to exorcise a demon or to heal a mentally sick person. The accused men had not deprived the owners of possession of the slave; they had committed no violent act nor disturbed public law and order. They had, in fact, done nothing of which they could justly be accused before the court. The complainants, however, felt that they would have the sympathy of their rulers, for Philippi did not like Jews; with malevolent insolence they trumped up a charge which, if sustained, would bring the accused within the reach of the law. The charge was that of preaching and making

converts to an illegal religion. "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to observe, neither to receive, being Romans". It should be noticed that Judaism was a tolerated religion, not an illegal religion, and Christianity at this early time was considered by Rome as the same thing as Judaism; no difference was recognised and it was not the alleged teaching of either Christ or Moses which was the charge. Illegal religions were mainly certain Eastern philosophies which Rome refused to tolerate and the Apostles certainly had not been preaching those. The charge was false. Had Paul and Silas been given any opportunity of defending themselves they could easily have refuted the accusation—but they were not given the opportunity. The words had hardly been spoken before the mob was yelling itself hoarse and the magistrates, with callous disregard for justice, conscious only that here was an opportunity to shew their contempt and hatred for anything Jewish, and to satisfy the citizens with an exhibition of sadistic cruelty, commanded that the prisoners be summarily flogged.

Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. A law known as the Lex Porcia, dating from 247 B.C., exempted all Roman citizens from the punishment of scourging, and in at least one notable case in Roman history a judge who flouted that law was himself very severely dealt with. It is obvious that in the tumult and haste of the proceedings and their inability to make any defence, the Apostles had no opportunity to state their claim to citizenship, or if they did, their plea was ignored. With all the brutality invariably associated with such occasions, the lictors stripped them of their clothes, tied them to the public whipping posts and beat them unmercifully with their rods, until the gloating crowd was somewhat appeased and the half-fainting victims were dragged away to the city prison and handed over to the jailer, evidently to be incarcerated for an unspecified period and not improbably with the intention that in the secrecy of the prison they would be put to death and their bodies flung into the river.

The jailer, charged to keep his prisoners safely, put them in the stocks—*xylon*, a structure similar to the mediæval British stocks, having holes for head, hands and feet. In this case they seem to have been secured by the feet only and left for the night in a cramped and painful position on the hard and

probably foul floor of the prison, bleeding and in agony from the flogging to which they had been subjected.

And they sang! They sang psalms and hymns! Psalms and hymns of praise unto God. They praised God and they prayed! In all that searing pain, in stress of body cruelly bruised and torn by the rods, and the aching agony of cramped and fettered limbs, their spirits soared above their circumstances and surroundings. Their voices rose upon the night air in that prison, "and the prisoners heard them"! Other men, perhaps women too, were incarcerated in that evil place, in just as much physical torment perhaps, possessed by terrors and fears for the future, and they heard the singing of those two men whose spirits were so much greater than their suffering bodies. The prisoners listened.

What did they sing? It must have been something from the psalms of David, words from that glorious treasury of faith and confidence. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" "In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid what man can do unto me". Strange words, the other prisoners must have thought, to be heard in a prison like this. Closely secured, injured and helpless, probably appointed to death; what God was He that could possibly deliver these men from this prison and from the power of Rome? Now listen to them! "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle". Who is this Lord of whom they sing and to whom they pray. How can He possibly break down this prison and command these gates and doors to open? "In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God; He heard my voice out of His temple and my cry came before Him. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of the hills moved and were shaken . . ." The triumphant voices reached a pinnacle of strength; it was as if the very walls themselves were vibrating in unison with those heaven-ascending tones, as if the very doors were rattling against their bolts and bars in the endeavour to open before that God to whom these men were offering worship. But what was this? These walls were vibrating; these doors were shaking loose. The other prisoners must have strained at their bonds in terror as the grim walls shuddered and cracked, as the floor heaved

and the doors groaned open, the iron staples securing their chains came out of the walls and first one and then another found himself free. The earthquake which was shaking Philippi made of no avail all the restraints of that prison, and its occupants huddled together in one group, terrified, but free.

The jailer, asleep in his own apartment, wakened suddenly as the room rocked about him. Governor of a fairly important city prison, he was probably an old army man of wide experience and recognised the happening for what it was. An earthquake was no new thing to him. But when his professional look took in the fact that all the dungeon doors stood open his attitude underwent a quick change. Open doors meant escaped prisoners; by now they were probably well away making good use of this sudden turn of fortune. Rome had only one treatment for jailers who lost their prisoners—death. The reason for the escape was of no interest to the superior powers. This jailer knew better than to expect mercy and he determined to anticipate the inevitable. He drew his sword with the intention of ending his life by his own hand. Paul must have seen the impulsive action and cried out at once to save the man. *“Do thyself no harm; for we are all here”*. Why the other prisoners had not made good their escape does not readily appear. It may have been fear of the earthquake; it may have been the impression produced by the singing of the Apostles and some superstitious idea that perhaps they would be safer in the company of these who evidently had the gods on their side. There is not much doubt that the jailer quickly connected the inexplicable releasing of the prisoners' bonds and the earthquake which had effected that release with some greater power than that of Nature. This was no ordinary earthquake, he must have reasoned, and in a swift revulsion of feeling he abandoned the whole of his Roman arrogance and prostrated himself before Paul and Silas with the trenchant question which has been asked—and answered—so many times in the world's history. *“What must I do to be saved?”*

To that question there was—and is—only one possible answer. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”*. But let no one think that merely academic assent to the truth of Christ's coming, the rightness of His message, and the fact of His death on behalf of fallen man, is all that is intended. Salvation is a word that is often used very loosely, as though it merely indicates the

receipt of a ticket entitling one to entrance into Heaven when life on earth shall end, or the bestowment of an abiding peace and confidence during this life which removes all worry and apprehension because Christ has become Master and Leader. There is much more in salvation than this. Fallen man is deprived of life, the true life which is God-given and can only be the portion of those who are in union with God; without that life the man is out of tune with God's creation and must eventually lose his place in that creation. And the life which God gives can only come to man through Christ, who is the channel of life. The jailer must needs be joined in living union with Christ before he can receive salvation, and this is what Paul meant by believing on Him. So it came about that *“they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.”* It says much for the sincerity and eagerness of this Philippian jailer that in the short space of a few hours—the earthquake was at midnight and by daylight the prison had official visitors—he was able to receive enough of the word of the Lord intelligently to make a complete consecration of himself to God and be baptised in symbol of his being thus “dead with Christ”. It is even more surprising to find that all his household shared with him in this new-found faith and in this baptism. The story reads as though everything happened on the spur of the moment, but such conversions are rarely like that. It is much more likely that this Philippian jailer—Roman or Greek, we know not—and his family had been disturbed in mind for a great while past, longing and searching for something better than they had, although it has to be admitted that the treatment of Paul and Silas when admitted to the prison does not appear easily reconcilable with a man in whom such sentiments and yearnings for better things were struggling for expression. Perhaps, after all, this was genuinely a case where people who walked in darkness saw a great light (Isa. 9. 2), and that the earthquake and its strange consequences revealed in a flash to this unbelieving man the truth to which hitherto he had been completely blind. Even so great is the power of God in Christ's redeeming love when the one concerned is ready to respond.

The earthquake may have been responsible for another effect also. The two jacks-in-office who had so summarily condemned the Apostles on the previous day were now in somewhat chastened mood. They sent the lictors (“serjeants” in 16. 35) to the prison

with instructions for immediate release of the two prisoners. Whether they felt uneasy at their irregular handling of the matter or superstitiously connected the earthquake with their action and feared the wrath of the gods, does not appear, but they evidently hoped to wash their hands of the whole affair by permitting the Apostles to depart unhindered. The jailer, doubtless overjoyed, passed the news to Paul expecting him to accept the dismissal with alacrity. But not so Paul. He intended the illegality of the case to be openly admitted in the sight of all men. *"They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans (Roman citizens) and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out"*.

The lictors' message created considerable consternation when it was transmitted to the magistrates. The possibility that the two Jews they had treated so viciously might be entitled to the honour of Roman citizenship—a privilege not often accorded to Jews—had not occurred to them. And now *"they feared, when they heard that they were Romans"*. In the expressive jargon of today, they were scared stiff, and with good reason. Paul and Silas had only to lay a complaint before the Pro-Consul, the supreme Governor of the Senatorial Province of Macedonia, in which territory Philippi lay, and the two offending officials would find themselves in serious trouble with attached penalties too terrible to contemplate. It is an incidental fact that the Emperor Claudius, who was the ruler of the Roman Empire at the time of this incident, was a stickler for the proprieties in the administration of the law, and any Roman holding an official position of any kind had to be more than usually careful in discharging the duties of his office. All in all, the two would-be dictators of Philippi felt they were

in a difficulty which could be resolved in only one way. Most humiliating it would be, for without doubt the citizens of Philippi would learn of the circumstances and their pomp and dignity would inevitably suffer; better that, they must certainly have reasoned, than an appearance before the Pro-Consul with no excuse for their conduct. So the two officials came to Paul and Silas and humbly begged them graciously to accept freedom, and depart as speedily as they would from Philippi.

They did not go at once. There was an assembly at the house of Lydia, the first convert, and there, doubtless, they counselled and exhorted the infant Church to steadfastness and Christian growth. Then they departed—at least Paul and Silas. It seems that Luke remained at Philippi, and rejoined Paul only when the latter came again to Philippi several years later (between 16. 19 and 20. 5 the "we" gives place to "they" in the narrative indicating that the writer, Luke, was not with them). It might well be that much of the building up of this Philippian church, which afterwards came to mean so much to the Apostle of the Gentiles, was due to the quiet labours of the "beloved physician".

The name of the converted jailer is not given; without much doubt he joined himself to the newly-formed church and was found in fellowship with Lydia and the other converts. What eventually happened to him we do not know but he could hardly have remained in the prison service. Perhaps he devoted his time to setting free prisoners from a greater bondage than he had known before, leading men out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. Meanwhile the two stout-hearted fellow labourers, Paul and Silas, were stepping out steadily on the road which led southwards to Thessalonica.

*(To be continued)*

We who are the Lord's are not living for the present time. We are expecting great changes to be ushered in when our King shall take to himself His great power and begin His reign. We are not to be struggling for the last inch or the last penny, nor for the extreme of our own rights; but rather, to be so full of rejoicing in the good things coming, and already ours by faith, that it will make us generous as respects the present time in our dealings with the brethren and with others.

\* \* \*

Have you ever stood surrounded by the surging waves of unrest and doubt? Then listen to the echoes of that same voice speaking directly to you to-day. His feet have left their mark. His finger points the way, and His presence goes with you on the journey. You call Him Master and Lord. Let Him be so fully. It is that obedience and adoration which He asks and longs for. It is the blessing which comes therefrom that alone can satisfy the hunger of your heart.

*(A. T. Schofield)*

## BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A doctrinal essay

The word baptism is of Greek origin and is carried forward into the English language and always applied to the religious life of Jews immediately prior to the Christian era or to those who embrace Christianity. That the word means to dip or immerse cannot be denied, though treatises have been laboriously compiled endeavouring to prove the word to mean "sprinkle" rather than "immerse". The fact, noted in the Bible, that John was baptising near to Salim because there was much water there is sufficient proof of the word's meaning. But while the word is from the Greek and is not to be found in the O.T. it is usual for commentators to imply that baptism for the remission of sins is hinted at in the Mosaic washings. The connection is, however, remote, for while water was used, immersion was not practised and the trespasser washed *himself* as part of the purification, whereas baptism is always performed by another. Further, there are other baptisms mentioned in Scripture which have no connection with water immersion. It is an essential part of the teaching of baptism that the candidate cannot immerse himself. And most Christians prefer to hold that baptism, whether of water or of the Holy Spirit, whether into the body of Christ or into death, is an act done for them. But though baptism is not found in the O.T., New Testament writers reason that two instances of baptism, as it were, are portrayed there—one in which the family of Noah was saved through water (though water was the destroying agent in the Flood and they were saved through being in the Ark), and where Israel, walled round with water and roofed by cloud at the Red Sea, were immersed into Moses. (1 Pet. 3. 20-21; 1 Cor. 10. 2).

It is probably advisable to approach this subject by copious reference to Scripture, and in that approach forget the thoughts of commentators. To do this we need a concise statement of the initiation of baptism; and so to commence our travel through an interesting and edifying tenet of Scripture we select Mark 1. 5 "*... and were all baptised of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins*". Did the waters actually wash away their sins? Surely not! Did their confession of sins secure them forgiveness? Surely not! We should remember that at the time of John's

mission the only means whereby sin can be absolved and its penalty remitted (the atoning death of Jesus Christ) had not been achieved, though it was near fulfilment and we may well believe that John's work was in anticipation of coming redemption. The marginal rendering of one word in Mark 1. 4 will define the true work of John and make a link with the following atonement by Christ—"John did baptise in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance *unto* the remission of sins". Thus his work was unto, or toward, or with a view to, the coming deliverance.

It was proper that those Israelites who regarded John as a prophet sent from God should acknowledge his office by answering his call. They would remember, or had heard of, the remarkable circumstances of his birth—that he was born as a consequence of Divine intervention; and that as a sign to his priestly father of the surety of the fulfilment of the promise of a son, he became dumb until the child was born and named according to instructions. The miracles attending his birth were so well known that the people expected great things of him and said "What manner of child shall this be!" Clearly he was marked as a man of God before his birth; and when thirty years later he begins his short-lived mission, the question of the priests and Levites "Who art thou?" is not to ask his name but to find out his rank and authority. The cry of John in the wilderness calling to repentance and baptism caused the people to muse in their hearts, were he the Christ or not (Luke 3. 15). Upon his confession that he was not Christ, their thoughts turn to two other prophesied characters of the O.T.—Elias and "that prophet". But he affirms that he is not either of these. They knew of the promise of Messiah; they knew of the prophecy of the coming one like to Moses; and they knew that Elias must first come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. If they could identify him they would satisfy themselves and those back in Jerusalem who had sent them to make enquiries. "Who art thou?" they say (John 1. 20-22). In answer, he tells them that he also is a prophesied O.T. character mentioned by the prophet Isaiah. Apparently they did not know of, or think of, this prophecy of the voice in the wilderness,

the forerunner of Messiah. Here was a sign of the time. All were in expectation, and by comprehending his mission they would realise that Messiah was to come very, very soon. What an answer to those who had sent them! But the questioners want further information—"Why baptisest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet" (John 1. 25). They assume that only a prophet of very high rank would call Israel to baptism, thus instituting something new to those Mosaic practices they were so trained in. But John does not answer why. They were always more concerned with "Why teacheth thou" than "What teacheth thou". It is clear from John's words that as the forerunner of Messiah he had come to prepare a people for the Lord. Such a people being baptised and acknowledging their sins (thus admitting they were not satisfied with the clearance from sins made under the ceremonial law) would be the very people fit to accept the coming Messiah. Such was one of the objects of his baptising mission.

But that is not the only reason why John proclaimed baptism. Among the many who came to be immersed was one whom John knew himself unfit to immerse. John knowing his baptism was unto remission of sins is surprised that Jesus should ask to be immersed, and felt rather that he himself should be baptised of Jesus; but he yields to our Lord's request. We might think that of all men He should not be immersed if baptism is for or unto remission of sins. We might think that if He were not immersed He would the more stand out as the sinless one and so be manifest to Israel. (The suggestion of some, that He was immersed in order to be numbered with the transgressors does not deserve consideration). How else could He be made manifest to Israel, for which purpose John had come baptising? (John 1. 31). Strangely enough John says (v. 32) that prior to Jesus' immersion, He knew Him not; yet they were related and it is unthinkable that they had not previously met. Does John mean that up to that time he had not realised that the Jesus he knew so well, was in fact the One of Whom he was the forerunner? Yet, when Jesus presented Himself for immersion John must have said to himself "Of course, this is He". Or, does John mean that he assumed Jesus was Messiah, but did not know him as the Lamb of God until the Holy Spirit abode on him? For we remember that many knew of glorious Messianic prophecies but did not realise the sufferings of Christ which must

precede the glory. Be that as it may, John's instructions were that upon whom he should see the Spirit descending and remaining, he it was for whom he was seeking and thus he would be manifest to Israel. The descent of the Spirit and the voice from heaven saying "This is my beloved Son" sealed John's work and revealed the Son of God; and promptly next day he announces the Lamb of God. He Who would give true remission to those who by water baptism had confessed their sins.

In this connection we see a third reason why John came baptising—that He upon whom the descending Spirit remained would baptise with the Holy Spirit. In this verse 33 we have reference to baptism not connected with water, but still the word has the thought of immersion. In fact, the more one considers the allusions to baptism the less do they suggest sprinkling. Nothing more is then said by John about the Holy Spirit, and only by reference to other Scripture and incidents in the early days of Christianity shall we be able to see its meaning. However, it will quickly be seen that water immersion is momentary and that the other baptisms are each full of meaning and relate to the whole life of Christians. In fact, water baptism would have seemed fit to have fallen into disuse like the old sacrifices of the law, were it not that our Lord was immersed at the commencement of His ministry. Had our Lord not been immersed Christians would have thought baptism to have been exclusively Jewish and that they were not called upon to observe it. And here we must consider further why Jesus was baptised in water. Later in His ministry (Luke 12. 50) He said He had a baptism to be baptised with and that He was straitened until it was accomplished, and shortly after He had asked the sons of Zebedee (Matt. 20. 22) if they were willing to drink of His cup and be baptised with the baptism that He was being baptised with; and by this He was plainly showing that baptism related to His immersion into the will of God, which for Him meant baptism into death. And in this view of baptism we may reason that water baptism was an outward sign of the commencement of His great mission, and that His death on Calvary was the outward sign of its fulfilment. The sons of Zebedee would not at that time comprehend the full import of His question to them; (and maybe we do not today); but they said they were willing to be immersed with His baptism, and later they followed their Lord into death as faithful witnesses. The words of the apostle

John in 1 John 5. 6 fittingly corroborate the thought that baptism in its fuller meaning referred to His whole life and death—*"This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth"*. John clearly has in mind the beginning and end of our Lord's mission, and to maintain the true meaning of our Lord's baptism repeats the words "not by water only, but by water and blood". And said he "It is the Spirit that beareth witness". Yes, the descending Spirit bore witness at His immersion and again bore witness that His baptism unto death fulfilled His mission by descending upon the waiting brethren at Pentecost. John further adds *"There are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one"*. They agree in one eternal testimony to Him Whose life on earth was summed up in one word, "baptism". Thus we may see, that Jesus' baptism in water was not for the remission of sins like other Israelites, but was a beautiful portrayal of His immersion into the will of God.

This being one of the meanings of baptism, no Christians who are willing to follow their Lord would object to water immersion for themselves, for the servant is not above his Lord. They may of course reason that water baptism as a means of cleansing from sin could be applicable to themselves but never applicable to their Lord. True enough, but we must ever remember that water immersion does not remove sin—in fact, it cannot. Every Christian knows that forgiveness of sins ensues as a gracious gift of God upon their belief in the name of His Son Jesus Christ. We may, of course, in a manner of speaking refer to washing away of sins, as in Acts 22. 16, but we know in ourselves that the calling on the name of the Lord is the effectual means of cleansing, not the water immersion. So then, freeing our minds from all thoughts of remission of our sins by immersion, we can, as did our Lord, use water immersion as a symbol of our willingness to be immersed into the will of God. And what a fine portrayal there is, in the fact of total immersion! But having said that, we must remember that water immersion is only a symbol, and the real immersion into the will of God is far more important than the symbol. We say this because it is probably true that many Christians in time past faithfully did the will of God as they saw it, but had not been immersed in water, and we cannot think that their

standing before God is jeopardised by their lack of knowledge or compliance. But for ourselves, if we see it as a symbol and remember that our Lord Himself was immersed, we also should comply.

At this juncture we must return in our thoughts to the prophet John's words in John 1. 33 *"Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he that baptiseth with the Holy Spirit"*. We have seen that these prophetic words began to be fulfilled when the Spirit bore witness by coming upon the waiting disciples at Pentecost. To these words of John should be linked the words of our Lord in Acts 1. 5 *"For John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days hence"*. Upon the phenomenal descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, Peter rises to explain to his Jewish brethren that this is also in fulfilment of the prophet Joel's words and concludes his remarks by urging them to be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus whereupon they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This cannot be a repetition of John the Baptist's call, for John made no appeal in the name of the Lord Jesus. But now that Christ had been crucified and raised from the dead there was "none other name under heaven whereby we must be saved", and it was manifest that any appeal to Jews to return to harmony with God should come through Him. In considering Acts 2. 38 it should not be assumed that water immersion is immediately followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit—in fact there is no evidence as to when these 3,000 souls received this gift. In Acts 8 we read of Samaritans being baptised (for the invitation was no longer exclusively Jewish) in the name of the Lord Jesus, and yet they did not receive the Holy Spirit until the arrival of the disciples from Jerusalem, who prayed for them and laid hands on them. Can we suppose that the Holy Spirit would have been withheld from any true Samaritan convert to the faith, if the apostles had not intervened? It is difficult to assess the true position of Samaritans at that time. It seems that, beholding miracles and hearing the words of Philip, they believed and were baptised with speed and readiness—perhaps too readily, for baptism should not be hastily entered upon, and it appears that one of their number was not right before God. We leave them, as did Philip, who was called away by the Spirit to assist the eunuch of Candace, who with his inquiring mind and love of the Scriptures rings true. From the narrative

(Acts 8. 36) we observe that the first mention of baptism comes from the eunuch himself. Upon requesting immersion they both go down into the water, clearly for total immersion. And here it should be remembered that verse 37 is not to be found in the three most dependable manuscripts. This may not seem of great moment, for the question supposedly made to the eunuch seems appropriate. Yet it is far better to think that the eunuch (as should all other candidates) asked for immersion rather than Philip asked him and required him to make a declaration of faith before he would immerse him. The responsibility for immersion is the candidate's and we should believe that any Christian asking for baptism has by that request declared his faith. (The responsibility in the companion ordinance—the Lord's supper—is the partaker's, who should examine himself—1 Cor. 11. 28).

Another enlightening event in the practice of baptism among Christians is revealed in Acts 10 and 11. The story is vividly detailed by the writer, and readers may well think it to be a turning-point in God's dealings with those outside the Jewish nation. We should read the narrative carefully for some are anxious to read into the story that Cornelius was, if not a proselyte of the temple, at least a proselyte of the gate, and therefore to assume that the entry of Gentiles into equal standing with Jews commenced under the apostleship of Paul rather than of Peter. The thrice repeated vision to Peter and his plain words on the subject leave no doubt in un-biased minds that God was from then on dealing with Gentiles as never before. Particular notice must be made of some incidents in the story of Cornelius. First, that both Peter and he had visions, but whereas Cornelius complied with the angel's instructions immediately, Peter did not move in the matter until the vision had three times been given him. And we note that the devout Gentile is quick to respond to the heavenly call, but that the servant of God is slower to act, so ingrained in his Jewish mind are the traditions of Israel. But he acts at the request of the three men whom Cornelius sent, and still with the vision in his mind, goes back with his men to Cæsarea. Cornelius is clearly expecting them, and on Peter's arrival falls down to worship him. It is to Peter's credit that he will not permit anyone, even a Gentile, to worship him because he is a servant of God—a principle which some who regard themselves as the successors of Peter have

yet to learn. Peter hears the story of Cornelius' vision and could not withstand the clear leading of heaven, and so he preaches Christ to the assembled enquirers. While he speaks the Holy Spirit is poured out on the Gentiles, thus evincing God's blessing and acceptance of their devotion and belief. Here we should note that the Holy Spirit was given to these Gentiles before they were baptised in water. This undoubtedly proves that the Holy Spirit baptism is not dependent upon water baptism; and that water baptism is a symbol; and that the Gentile immersion was not in response to John's call to baptism for the remission of sins. On Peter's return to Jerusalem, the story having preceded him, some still having Jewish bias contended with him, but when Peter rehearsed the matter they held their peace, realising that by the gift of the Holy Spirit to Gentiles God had shown that they also were now acceptable with Him. Peter saw, in all this, further fulfilment of our Lord's words (Acts 11. 16, Matt. 3. 11, Acts 1. 5).

We cannot leave the Acts of the Apostles without another reference to those early days. We read in Acts 18. 24-26 of a Jew mighty in the Scriptures, yet knowing only the baptism of John; and because the purpose of God had progressed beyond his knowledge two faithful brethren expounded unto him the way of the Lord more perfectly. Surely they showed to him that the way of approach to God had changed through the coming, death and resurrection of Christ. The very next verses in ch. 19 show the lack of knowledge among some disciples at Ephesus. Although it was perhaps seventeen years after Pentecost, they had not heard of the Holy Spirit and had been baptised with John's baptism. Briefly, the teaching of Paul's reply (v. 4) is that John's baptism is outdated by the coming of Christ. These Ephesians were then baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus and received the Holy Spirit.

These striking references in the Acts show the change in baptism since John's days—the practice of water baptism does not cease, but its meaning alters; and also there is the newer baptism of the Holy Spirit fulfilling our Lord's promises.

Later, when Paul wrote to the brethren at Ephesus, no doubt he would think of these twelve brethren when he said (Eph. 4. 5) that there was one baptism. What baptism does Paul mean? It is unlikely that he means water immersion, for of that subject he says very little. Surely he means that as concerns the

Church there is but one baptism, even as there is one Body and one Spirit. By holding to these we shall keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. In an earlier epistle he explains the relationship of the one baptism to the one Body—that the one Spirit has baptised us, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, into the one Body of Christ. Thus we shall see in 1 Cor. 12. 13 and other associated words by Paul, such as Gal. 3. 27, Col. 2. 12; and Rom. 6. 3, the full development of the Bible teaching on baptism. The story begins with the immersing of Jews, who, confessing their sins, were preparing themselves for the first coming of Messiah, and it is retained in the Christian Church as a symbol of their willingness to be immersed into the will of God. And

He who accepts this willingness of heart to do His will baptises them with the Holy Spirit. This shedding forth of the Holy Spirit is the means whereby He sets the members in the body, or, in other words, baptises them into the body of Christ. And He noting those willing to be baptised with Christ's baptism, promises that if they are planted or immersed into His death they shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. These two are inseparable—he who is baptised into the body of Christ will also be baptised into His death. And in all these considerations we come to the full Bible meaning of the word baptism—that it means immersion in whatever province it is used by the inspired writers.

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## **THIS HOPE WE HAVE**

A Whitsun message

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*"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus Christ the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."* (Heb. 4. 14).

What is probably the most significant event of the First Advent occurred when the risen Lord ascended visibly in his disciples' presence on the Mount of Olives until a cloud received him out of their sight. On the cross Jesus was temporarily overcome by the powers of evil; He yielded up his spirit to God and died, the just for the unjust. His ascension forty days later was, on the contrary, an outward manifestation of his triumph over the powers of evil. Death now no more had dominion over him. (Rom. 6. 9). Incidentally that expression of St. Paul is a very real one. Death really did have dominion over him for the three days in which He lay in the grave, his spirit resigned to the Father, a dominion which came to an end on that Easter morning when He burst the bonds of the tomb and rose again in the power of an endless life. Momentous as was the happening when at the first He emptied himself of his heavenly glory and took a bondman's form for the suffering of death (Phil. 2. 7-8) of even greater moment was his return to that heavenly glory having all power in heaven and earth for the elimination of evil and the establishment of everlasting righteousness.

This is the vision which inspired the writer to the Hebrews when he spoke of the solid foundation upon which the Christian faith is established "*The hope set before us*" he calls it "*which hope we have as an anchor of the*

*soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whether the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek.*" (Heb. 6. 19-20). This reference to Melchisedek is full of meaning. It speaks, not of sacrifice and death, but of Divine blessing and life. Melchisedek was a priest and a king, combining both offices in his one person in those far-off-days when Abraham was a sojourner in Canaan. He comes on the scene only very briefly, at the time the invaders of Canaan had taken Abraham's brother-in-law Lot captive with all his possessions, and Abraham went after them with his followers to rescue the prisoners. It was as Abraham returned in triumph that as recounted in the narrative in Gen. 14, Melchisedek King of Salem brought forth bread and wine and blessed Abraham, and, says the chronicler, "*He was the priest of the Most High God*". No more is said about him or of the mysterious order of priesthood of which he was the then head or of the equally mysterious people over whom he ruled. It was left to the writer of Hebrews two millenniums later to take hold of this incident and weave it into the fabric of his argument. "*Consider how great this man was*" he invites "*unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.*" The great point about Melchisedek is that he "*abideth a priest continuously*". The fact that neither his birth nor his death, his predecessors or successors, are recorded in Scripture enabled the later writer to make him a type

or illustration of the eternal priesthood of Christ after his ascension. There was no sacrifice, no making atonement for sin, associated with the priestly office of Melchisedek; only the dispensing of gifts and blessings, the exercise of a royal benevolence. In this it differed from the order of Aaron, which existed only for the making satisfaction for sin, in another respect it differed also. The Aaronic priesthood was a dying priesthood; the High Priest in any one generation must needs give place to another in the course of time. *"They truly were many priests because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. But this, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood"*. The High Priest Aaron, and his successors, each in his own day, in the execution of their duties, pictured Jesus in his earthly life, a life of sacrifice, making atonement for the sins of the world. The word atonement means to cover, to obliterate, and when the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the Propitiatory in the Most Holy place of the Tabernacle or the Temple, he was in symbol blotting out the peoples' sins in the sight of God. But there was a further element in the ritual before the people were free from the weight of their sins. After the offering of the blood the High Priest must emerge again and take his place in full view of all the people, raise his hands and invoke the Divine blessing upon them. Only when that point was reached could it be said that the offering had done its work. Only then could each man of Israel feel that he stood in a cleansed position before God.

So it is in the reality. Speaking of this very ritual of the high priest entering into the holy place every year with the blood of the offerings, he goes on to say *"and as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"* (the "men" here are the successive High Priests who died symbolically in the ceremony, for the slain beast was a substitution and in symbol it was the Priest who offered himself to God, and it was after this offering that the judgment of God in the acceptance of the offering was manifested in the re-appearance of the Priest to bless the people) *"so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."* (Heb. 9. 27-28). Here is an exact correspondence. Christ offered himself into death just as did the Priest in the old ritual; Christ must re-appear, this time without sin (the word means sin-offering, for

Christ does not offer himself a second time for sin) but definitely for the blessing of those for whom the offering has been made—the whole world of man. This is where the order of Melchisedek comes in. The priesthood of Aaron pictures the work of Christ at his first Advent and until his resurrection; that of Melchisedek pictures his position and work after his resurrection and ascension and at his Second Advent. *"Unto them that look for him."* That is the age-old hope of the Church, waiting for the promised return of the Lord Jesus Christ to complete the war against evil and fulfil the whole purpose of God.

This is why the Apostle Paul exhorted his pupil Titus to *"live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"* (Titus 2. 12). The duty of the Christian is to administer the obligations of the Christian faith both in inward sanctification and outward witness during this intervening time between the First and Second Advents in continual expectation of the promised Return, not looking for that Return as the end of all things for mankind, but rather as an occasion for a new effusion of blessing upon mankind. If the Second Advent brought nothing but the catastrophic ending of all save the "elect" it could hardly be appropriately described as a "blessed hope" and a "glorious appearing". In point of fact that aspect of the Lord's return which has to do with judgment passed upon evil things is referred to a fewer number of times than that which depicts it as an occasion of blessing and rejoicing, of light and life. No philosophy of the work of the Second Advent is complete which does not include a place for the evangelisation of the world, for multitudes to come to the feet of the Saviour, for the opportunity of salvation to "whosoever will" untrammelled by the deceptions of Satan and the hampering effects of abounding evil. The Messianic kingdom must run its course, and the nations walk in its light—even those of old time like the men of Tyre and Sidon, and Sodom and Gomorrah, who are to find the retributive judgments of that Kingdom "more tolerable" than will the Pharisees of our Lord's own day. (Matt. 11. 22; Mark 6. 11)—before the Last Assize is held. Nothing less is demanded by the selection of Melchisedek as a type of Christ in his work of glory—a dispenser of Divine favour and a king ruling in righteousness.

This present world is but a stage in man's

progress, a stage in which sin and the results of sin mar the Divine image in man and hamper his attainment of the Divine purposes. But the image will be restored and the purpose served. It may well be that the exercise of the free will which God has implanted in man and without which he would not be man may lead some at the end to refuse their intended place in God's creation, to refuse the gift of life upon the only terms on which God can bestow it. It must be, nevertheless that at least the vast majority of earth's millions will, as the Divine purpose works itself out through one age after another, attain at last a heart appreciation of the goodness of God, and in whole hearted submission to the Lord Jesus Christ come, as Isaiah of old said the ransomed of the Lord would come, to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, while sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isa. 35. 10).

Of course the story does not stop even there. Through all the infinite ages, ages without end, development and progress will go on. Heaven is not a static condition and there is no finality in the things said and done in that place. There will always be some new thing to learn, always some greater thing to do, always some higher pinnacle of achievement to surmount. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (1 Cor. 2. 9). Spiritually, by faith, we know that these things are so although we cannot visualise them and for the present with that we must be content.

So the angel's words to those few disciples standing on the Mount of Olives after their Lord had ascended before their very eyes

were words of confidence and assurance. "This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1. 11). The English expression "in like manner" fails by far to express the real force of the heavenly message. It was not that He was to return in similar clothing with similar appearance, descending in bodily form to stand on the solid earth just as He had ascended from it. The expression is derived from a word denoting the regular and consistent course of the sun round the earth within a fixed channel or pathway in which it must certainly appear at its due time. It is as though the angels had said "as surely as you have seen him go into heaven so surely will He follow his fixed course and come again." "As surely as the sun sets in the west tonight, so surely will it rise in the east tomorrow." It was that expression of certitude which sent the disciples back to Jerusalem with great joy and instilled into their minds and hearts a faith and fortitude which remained with them all their days. The Lord whom they served had finished with sacrifice and offering; He had passed into the heavens to receive a new and supremely exalted office, and one day He would certainly return to take his own to himself and bring the sons of men all those blessings which an infinitely wise and supremely loving God had prepared for them. Small wonder that the brightest hope of the Christian Church lies in the future, that discouragements and disappointments and failures of the present are as nothing compared to the glorious triumphs of the time when, at last, "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2. 10-11).

### BOOK REVIEW

"The Finger of God". 106 pp, 4pp photo-plates, stiff paper cover, 3/- post free, from "The Testimony", Parklands, Stoughton Lane, Evington, Leicester.

This is an enthralling production. Subtitled "Evolution or Creation" its aim is to show how the wonders of Nature give evidence of intelligent design in creation as opposed to the conclusions of Darwin expressed in current Evolutionary thought. The origin of the earth and of life upon it is shown to be dependent upon so peculiar an arrangement of interrelated factors that the probability of their happening in the way they have done without the overruling direction of Intelligence is nil. The story of the night

moth and the yucca flower, of the wood-boring wasp, of the spiders, the ants and the bees, the manner in which they go about their business and perpetuate their kind as though specially designed for the particular place they occupy in creation, is told with a wealth of detail in a fascinating manner. This is not just an academic essay presenting cold arguments against Evolution; it is a warm, vivid description of the wonderful works of God and it is only after finishing the book that one realises how effectively it has presented the case for special creation. The author has read widely; a wealth of footnotes records the sources of much of the factual information given. A useful and instructive booklet suitable for all classes of readers.

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**BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES**
**EXODUS**
**Part 8 The Plagues Chap. 7. 14—10. 29**


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In the seventh year of the reign of Amenhotep II, Pharaoh of all Egypt, the empire having attained a pinnacle of power and glory that had not been known before, the land being adorned with palaces and temples, monuments and works of architecture the admiration of all nations, there occurred a succession of unparalleled disasters which humbled the pride of Egypt to the dust and left the nation stunned and sorrowing. With a mighty hand and stretched out arm the Almighty, the Eternal, delivered the children of Israel from bondage that as a dedicated people they might serve Him without restraint or hindrance in a land of their own.

The Ten Plagues of Egypt stand as one of the spectacular events of Old Testament history. The extent to which the fearful calamities described in Exodus were freaks of Nature or miraculous interventions of God has been a subject of debate for centuries but there is no denying the reality of the happenings. The fame of them spread to the nations round about. Israel never forgot them, they formed the subject of triumphal song and poetry for generations after the events. Two of the Psalms of David, Psalms 78 and 105, memorialise the Ten Plagues as examples of the irresistible judgments of God. The Philistines, four centuries afterwards, when faced with the spectacle of the Ark of God brought into battle against them, told each other that here were the gods which smote the Egyptians with Plagues that long time ago. (1 Sam. 4. 8). Such was the impression left upon the minds of men by those unprecedented disasters, the cumulative effect of which finally persuaded Pharaoh to let Israel go.

The difference between these plagues being natural events or their being direct acts of God is not so marked when it is realised that "miracles" can only be such in the eyes of those who do not understand the processes involved. The dictionary definition of "miracle" is a wonder or marvel or supernatural event. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a supernatural event unless the term is used in the sense of that which is not of this terrestrial world. All the processes of Nature are controlled in the last place by God and the fact that men may not understand the whole of those processes does not make them any the less natural. The ancients credited

any happening they did not understand to the intervention of God but many of such are well understood to-day and no longer require direct supernatural Divine intervention to account for them. The word "miracle" in the Old Testament means merely a sign or a wonder; in the New Testament it is the translation of two words one of which means a sign and the other an act of power. It is only necessary therefore to accept the fact that the Most High, in His administration of the affairs of His creation, orders and exerts natural forces to accomplish His special designs at any particular moment in time. The plagues on Egypt may very well have been manifestations of phenomena, on an unusual scale, already known to the Egyptians; the supernatural aspect lay in the timing of the events whereby they came at the moment necessary to effect a desired result and this timing constituted a direct intervention. The fact that any remarkable incident recorded in the Scripture as caused or directed by God for a definite purpose can often be shown as a relatively natural phenomenon does not detract in the slightest from its "miraculous" nature. It is a sign, a wonder, occurring at a particular moment, to bring about some desired result in connection with the Divine Plan.

It is probable that Moses came away from his second interview with Pharaoh with this impression on his mind. God would now exert His mighty power to deliver Israel; Moses was sure of that. He would do it by the agency of natural forces, the powers of Nature let loose in more, much more than their usual intensity, until in abject terror Pharaoh would give the people their freedom. Moses was sure of that too. He did not know, as yet, just how the great event was to be brought about, but he did know that in times gone past God had sent His judgment upon the earth by a flood of waters, and again by a holocaust of fire, and he was ready now for whatever might betide.

So there came a morning when Pharaoh with his court went down to the brink of the river and found Moses and Aaron waiting for him. The prophets sternly reminded the monarch of his refusal to acknowledge the Lord and release His people and told him that in consequence the waters of the river were to

be turned into blood. Aaron stretched his staff over the water, and *"all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood, and the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river."* (7. 21-22).

If the plagues were in fact amplifications of natural customary happenings, the sequence of events can best be understood if it is considered that this first act of Moses took place in the June before the Exodus. At this time of year the Nile is normally in full flood, and in ancient times inundated the land, to the intense satisfaction of the population, who depended upon this annual inundation for the growth of their crops. In recognition of this vital part played by the river in the country's welfare an annual ceremony, the "festival of the Nile", in which Pharaoh took a leading part, was conducted at the riverside on 12th June, and worship was offered to the Nile-god. It might well be that the statement in 7. 15 *"Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning, lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink . . ."* is a reference to this festival, and if so this definitely fixes the time of the first plague as June.

It is only necessary to understand the narrative to imply that the waters took on a blood-red colour, not that the whole mighty river and its streams and canals were literally transformed into actual blood. This conclusion is evidenced by verse 24 which states that the Egyptians *"dugged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river."* Whatever it was that made the water objectionable was filtered out as it percolated through the soil along the river's margin so that the people, digging, found drinkable water. Had it been literal blood it would of course still have been blood even after passing through the soil. It is said by observers of Egyptian natural phenomena, with minor variations of detail, that the Nile has a greenish tint before the annual inundation; as the waters rise it becomes clear, and then for about three weeks or so it takes on a reddish tinge due to the presence of vast quantities of minute plant life of a red colour, originating from the tropical regions from which the river comes. In extreme cases these masses of algae, so closely packed that naturalists say there are as many as four hundred million millions to the cubic inch of water, cause the river to take on a deep blood-red colour and on such occasions the water has an offensive smell. If this be a fact then the first plague was simply

a most extreme case of a happening which was familiar to the Egyptians; the rapidity with which it occurred at the raising of Aaron's rod, and perhaps the unusually wide-spread extent of the red water, *"upon their streams"* (rivers) *"upon their rivers"* (canals) *"and upon their ponds"* (cisterns) *"and upon all their pools"* (reservoirs) marked the occurrence as a visitation from God. Perhaps because the affliction was recognised as no more than an extreme and very inconvenient case of a common occurrence it does not seem to have worried Pharaoh a great deal; he probably reasoned that it would soon pass anyway. In the meantime the magicians were called in to see what they could do to help matters.

It is commonly assumed that the expression in 7. 22 *"And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments"* means that they mimicked Moses by also turning water into blood. How they could do so when all the rivers, streams, canals and reservoirs in Egypt had already been thus treated is not explained. In fact what the magicians really tried to do was to reverse the process and make Moses' act of no effect. The word translated "did so" is *"lahatim"* which comes from *"lahat"*, to burn or set on fire. The meaning is that the magicians carried out ceremonies and incantations involving the use of lustral fires and burning incense, in supplication to their gods to have the affliction removed. To use a modern slang phrase which nevertheless accurately expresses the meaning of the original, the magicians "did their stuff". It is not stated either that they succeeded or failed, but the fact that verse 25 volunteers the information that the river remained in this condition for seven days appears to point to the latter.

It should be noticed here that in the first three plagues the magicians appeared, and in each case it will be seen that they endeavoured to counteract the plague, and failed. At the third attempt they declared that the hand of God was in the thing and withdrew; they are mentioned no more. The first three plagues affected Israel in common with Egypt; after that Israel was immune from the remaining plagues. It seems as though the early plagues partook largely of the nature of natural events which in lesser measure had often afflicted the land previously, but as the series progressed so the supernatural element became more and more marked, the hand of God becoming increasingly manifest until in the final blow, the simultaneous death of the

firstborn, there could be no natural explanation whatever.

A month or so passed by before the second plague. As the Nile inundation reaches its maximum the frogs become evident and the people normally take but little notice of them. This time they did. Perhaps because of the unusual conditions, the river choked up with vegetable organisms left over from the first plague, the quantities of dead fish involved as remarked in 7. 21, and the abnormal climatic conditions which had brought this condition about originally, the frogs were breeding in enormous and unheard of quantities. The Hebrew word in 8. 3 "*bring forth (frogs) abundantly*" is *sharats*, which means to swarm as though in uncontrolled numbers. This was the immediate visible consequence of Aaron's rod being stretched for the second time over the river. The frogs "came up" and covered the land, entering into the houses and even into the ovens and domestic utensils. Again were the magicians summoned; to expect them deliberately to try increasing the already intolerable plague is not very reasonable. The magicians "did so" with their enchantments, tried everything in the rules of their art to overcome the plague . . . "*and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt*". After doing all that they could, they only succeeded in bringing up more frogs; that is how it appeared to the onlooker. Nothing they did had any effect; the waves of little creatures came steadily on.

This time Pharaoh did take notice. "*Entreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go*" (8. 8). Moses wanted to establish beyond all dispute that the removal of the frogs would be due to God and not just in the natural course of things and so he bade Pharaoh name his own time for the act to be performed. "Tomorrow" said Pharaoh. Moses prayed to the Lord and on the morrow the frogs died out everywhere except in their natural habitat, the river. "*And they gathered them together upon heaps; and the land stank*". The coming of the frogs may well have been an extension of the customary natural process; the manner of their going was assuredly an act of Divine intervention.

But Pharaoh changed his mind and would not let the people go.

October had dawned before the third plague struck. The account does not tell of further interviews with Pharaoh, but it is probable that the onset of each plague was preceded by a formal demand to Pharaoh, a

demand which was brusquely refused. Perhaps six or eight weeks had passed since the frogs had been cleared from the land; now the well known form of Aaron was seen extending his rod, not this time over the river, but over the fields, and presently with a swift, decisive movement, striking downward to the earth. And from that earth there began to arise clouds of minute insects—lice in the A.V.—insects which multiplied and filled the air to such an extent that it seemed as if the very dust of the earth was itself being transformed into those masses of tiny flying creatures. So the plague of the lice upon the Egyptians was very great.

The account says that it was the dust of the earth which produced the lice; "*all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt*." (8. 17). It is said that as the rising Nile waters, toward the end of the inundation, begin to flood over the agricultural lands millions of insect pupa—flies and midges of all kinds—which have been deposited in the soft soil during the dry weather come forth into life and take to the air; it is almost as if the dust is bringing forth. The plague of lice might well therefore be another well-known happening distinguished only by the enormous scale on which it occurred on this occasion. Never before, the Egyptians might have thought, had the country known so tremendous a visitation of flying insects.

"*And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not; so there were lice upon man and upon beast. Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God*." (8. 18-19). Once more the familiar ceremonies and rituals were performed but to no better avail than before. The A.V. reads as though they tried to emulate Aaron and themselves "bring forth" lice, but this is the exact opposite of the real meaning. "Bring forth" here is *hatsa*, which means to send away, to cause an exit, to bring out or draw forth, and means that the magicians tried to cast the lice out or send them away. They failed, and, says the narrator, "*so there were lice upon man and upon beast*". Despite all that the magicians could do, the lice remained. Incidentally notice should be taken of the difference in meaning of "bring forth" in 8. 3 which as noted above is *sharats*, to swarm, and "bring forth", *hatsa*, in the verse now under review.

The magicians gave up. "*This is the finger of God*" they told Pharaoh. Three attempts to counteract the power of Aaron had all failed

and they had had enough. They took no further part in the proceedings. Nevertheless Pharaoh still refused to let the people go.

There now comes a significant development. The remaining plagues did not affect the land of Goshen, which was inhabited mainly by Israelites. The natural aspect of these visitations was becoming more and more overshadowed by signs of direct Divine intervention. This, declared Moses, was an evidence of the power of God, making a distinction between Egypt and Israel. From now on Egypt was to be driven more and more into a corner from which there could be no escape. From now on, following the defection of the magicians, Pharaoh was probably losing the support of his councillors, his nobles and his people to an increasing degree. But he was not ready to give in yet.

One hundred and twenty days after the 12th of June—four months—it was the custom to hold what was called the second festival of the Nile, to celebrate the successful culmination of the inundation. From now on the waters would cease to rise and presently, as they receded, the peasants would rejoicingly commence sowing crops in the rich sediment left on their land by the departing waters. It is almost certain that it is this second festival to which reference is made in 8. 20, in which, after the third plague, the Lord says to Moses *"Rise up early in the morning, stand before Pharaoh. Lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him . . ."* In the ordinary way this day was a great national holiday with Pharaoh as the chief figure giving public thanks to the Nile-god for his beneficent work for the year. It must have been with considerable chagrin on this November morning that Amen-hotep, surrounded by his court, came down to the river and found Moses waiting for him again.

Once more the demand: *"Let my people go . . . else, if thou wilt not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies upon thee . . ."* So the fourth plague came, and all the houses of the Egyptians were filled with what has been variously considered either a particularly virulent species of dog-fly, or else the flying beetle, the scarab beetle which to the Egyptians was the symbol of life. Pharaoh showed the first sign of cracking; he offered to let the people go and sacrifice to the Lord in the wilderness provided they did not go very far away. The plague was lifted, and Pharaoh broke his promise.

Inevitably there came the fifth plague. In December or perhaps early January a wide-

spread epidemic of disease decimated the Egyptians' cattle. *"But of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one"*. The effect of previous plagues probably contributed to the inability of the cattle to withstand disease. The expression in 9. 6 *"all the cattle of Egypt died"* need not be interpreted too strictly; in vs. 19 they still had some left. The intention clearly is to indicate that by far the larger proportion succumbed; Egypt was left virtually without cattle.

The pestilence raged for perhaps a month, and was then superseded by a greater horror, an epidemic of eruptive boils breaking forth upon man as well as beast. Perhaps the very magnitude of the calamity made effective medical treatment for any but a very few of the population impossible; men and women suffered without hope.

And now the pace of events is noticeably quickening. The boils on men followed hard on the pestilence among the cattle. Before the people could begin to find measure of relief there fell upon them the seventh plague, a fearful succession of violent storms of thunder and lightning, with torrential hailstones which flattened the young growing crops and broke down the trees. Egypt normally has very little rain; storms such as this must have been quite unknown. In fact the chronicler declares (9. 24) there had been nothing like it since Egypt became a nation. The time of year is clearly indicated, for the barley was in the ear, the flax was in blossom, and the wheat and rye were not yet grown. (31-32), which points to mid-February or early March. It is likely therefore that these three plagues, pestilence, boils and storms finished up with all three afflicting Egypt more or less simultaneously, for there is no indication of any of the three being lifted as with earlier ones. Pharaoh's nerve really began to give way under this crushing burden. He *"sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time"*—a masterly understatement—*"the Lord is righteous and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord, (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer."* (9. 27, 28). And Moses besought the Lord, and the Lord removed the plagues, and when Pharaoh had received of the goodness of the Lord, his heart hardened itself yet more, and he would not let Israel go.

Within a fortnight, by the middle of March at latest, the locusts came. Locusts have always been a plague to Eastern lands. Even

to-day they are a grave menace and the most modern extermination methods are often powerless against them. In all Old Testament imagery nothing is more descriptive of universal utter destruction than the coming of locusts. The Egyptians had no illusions as to what such a visitation meant, and when Moses stood before Pharaoh and declared that if he still refused to let Israel go the Lord would send locusts so numerous that men would no longer be able to see the ground under their feet, and everything that the previous plagues had left they would eat up and strip the land bare, Pharaoh's servants were stricken with terror. "*How long shall this man be a snare to us?*" they cried to the obstinate monarch. "*Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?*" (10.7). It is obvious that popular support for Pharaoh's policy was by now non-existent; the people of Egypt wanted nothing else but to see the last of the Israelites and the wrath of their powerful God. Pharaoh himself was apprehensive; he sent for Moses and Aaron and tried to negotiate terms. Moses was not prepared to negotiate. Unconditional surrender to his demands was the only thing he would accept and his opponent, furious, had them driven from his presence.

By the time the locusts had finished, Egypt was destroyed. "*There remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt*" (10. 15). Such of the growing crops as had escaped the hail had now been consumed by the locusts and there was no food either for man or beast. Without any doubt at all the year of the Exodus was a famine year for Egypt and in fact it must have been many more years before the losses suffered in the Plagues were made good. Pharaoh, horrified, besought Moses in haste; "*entreat the Lord your God that he may take away from me this death only*" but it is to be feared he was only concerned with the immediate calamity, for directly the west wind blew and carried all the locusts away into the sea he reverted to his old intransigence, "*he would not let the children of Israel go*". Though his empire crash in ruins around his feet and his subjects perish, the proud Amen-hotep refused to bow the knee to this despised Hebrew.

Reaction was swift. The day of deliverance was very near in the Divine calendar, perhaps not more than a week or so away. Nothing can stay the execution of God's decree once His clock strikes the hour. The locusts had

hardly been swept clear of Egypt when the stupefying darkness which was the ninth plague spread over the land, a darkness so profound that "*they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings*" (10. 23).

It was probably the same west wind that expelled the locusts which brought the darkness. Round about March each year there is frequently a strong southwest wind from the deserts bringing clouds of fine sand, blowing in spells of two to three days at a time. The sandstorms are so dense that on occasion they blot out the sun and it is quite conceivable that a particularly thick and sufficiently widespread sandstorm could produce the total darkness upon the earth which is stated of this plague. The fact that the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were, was unaffected, strengthens the case for thinking this was the cause of the darkness. Goshen lay farthest away from the western deserts and would be least likely in the natural order to suffer from such visitations.

Once more Moses and Aaron trod the familiar road to the palace, both of them more confident than ever, Pharaoh more edgy and apprehensive than ever. He was ready to concede all their demands but one; they must leave their flocks and herds behind. To do that would have been a virtual death sentence on the host; their flocks and herds were essential to their sustenance whilst in the wilderness and Moses rejected the proposal with scorn.

"*There shalt not an hoof be left behind*" he asserted flatly and at that Pharaoh lost his temper and ordered Moses to see his face no more "*for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die*".

"*Thou hast spoken well*" said Moses curtly. "*I will see thy face again no more.*"

(To be continued)

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"My Father, help me as a follower of Christ to say 'Thy will be done'. Thou would'st not have me accept thy Will because I *must*, but because I *may*. Thou would'st have me take it, not with resignation, but with joy, not with mere absence of murmur, but with song of praise . . . Give me, O Father, the blessedness of the man whose delight is in thy Law, who can tell of thy Statutes rejoicing the heart. Then shall I obey thee with perfect freedom and say from my heart 'Thy Will be done.'"

## TRANSFORMED

Counsel for the  
Christian Life

*"We all with unveiled face reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord and are transformed into the same image from glory to glory."*

Christians are not the only ones who would like to be better men and women. Professor Maxiey said, "I protest that if some great power would make me always think truth and do right on condition of my being turned into a sort of clock and wound up every morning, I would instantly close with the offer". "Oh, that I could only think right and do right" has been the desire of great men right down the ages.

This is our inheritance if we are the Lord's people. This is shown in the Word of God and can be obtained under the right conditions. It is as natural for the character to become beautiful as for flowers to become beautiful: the same Creator who instituted laws for the production of beautiful flowers instituted laws for the creation of beautiful characters.

Some claim that the only way to be transformed into the likeness of the Lord is to resolve by sheer willpower to overcome sin in our bodies and minds. There is nothing wrong in resolving to overcome sin, but that is not the vital point. Suppose we were on a ship which, when in the middle of the ocean refused to go, and those on deck tried by pushing at the masts to move it. It would not move, however much pressure they used; their strength would be used in the wrong way. They need to go down to the engine room, the real seat of power, and use every energy to put right what was wrong. Effort is useless unless exercised in the right direction. A drowning man cannot pull himself out of the water by his own hair.

Some say, "Our idea is to tackle one sin at a time and thus eradicate sin from our hearts that good may work." That would be a very big task for any man, to get sins one by one out of his life. That is the wrong way; sin is only overcome by something taking its place. The evil spirit discharged from the man must be replaced by the Lord's spirit or the last condition becomes worse than the first. The tackling of one sin at a time is therefore not the right method.

Still another method is to copy Christ's virtues. The word "copy" suggests the thought of an artist in wax or paint trying to

reproduce a beautiful flower. Many believe in Christ as the standard to be copied, but very few are able to copy Him. The power that is used is a power of self—a power within themselves instead of a power from without.

Again, some say, "How about self-examination"? Setting up a code of rules to which we must keep! A watchmaker once made a present of the parts of a watch, but when they were put together the main spring was missing. The vital thing is the power, or main-spring.

The Scriptures give us a valuable formula for our sanctification. There are laws of science and art, and if we would produce anything correctly we must use a formula. We are told that God's thoughts are higher than man's, and if the wisdom of men sees the necessity for a formula. God has not left us without one. 2 Cor. 3. 13-18 provides this formula, and in verse 18 reveals three laws: 1, *reflection*; 2, *assimilation*; and 3, *influence*.

Notice that it does not say we are transforming ourselves into the same image from glory to glory. No, we do not transform ourselves, we are changed or transformed. The changing power is something that does not naturally belong to ourselves, it is a power that comes from without. Throughout the New Testament we find that the verbs used in connection with our sanctification are passive. As far as the power of sanctification is concerned it is a power from without. We can come under the influence of His spirit and so be transformed. The barometer is made to tell us the condition of the weather, but it does not itself register the condition of the weather. The weather does that, the barometer responding to changes in the weather. So our responsibility is to bring ourselves into the attitude of susceptibility in which God can work on our minds. That is our part of the work, to get our hearts into that attitude of full consecration: take out anything and everything that would hinder the working of His Spirit. The Word of God must be received into our prepared hearts and the whole being must be yielded as members of righteousness. That is the thought in this text. We, beholding Christ with unveiled face, in our study of the Lord's Word and His example and teaching, see the glory of God. We see the beauty of God. He exemplifies to

us the character of God, and as we set our affections on that lovely character, our love for God and our study of His Word is so close to our hearts, we cannot but reflect it. A man is shaped and fashioned by that which he loves. We find two young people coming together; they see something they love in each other. They marry and live together for fifty years, and during that time a reflecting work is going on; one would speak as would the other; their very appearance becomes alike. If we are in love with the Lord, the things He says are the things we would say, the words He has given us are the words which express the sentiments of our hearts. We take them into our hearts and reflect them. Beholding Christ, we reflect His image, and we are changed from glory to glory. This word "glory" is rather a crude word to express the thought here. The Psalmist says, "*The heavens declare the glory of God*". There is a demonstration of the glory of God, His power, His wisdom and the grandeur of His mind. In other words, God's glory is His character. So we, beholding Christ, reflect His image and are transformed from character to character, from one character to a better character, then on to a still better one until we are ready for our final change. We are all mirrors, we cannot help it, and we are all reflecting, whether we know it or not.

Now, what is it we reflect? We reflect what we have gained from our environment. If we choose an environment that leads to a depraved life, we shall reflect that depravity. We shall also reflect if we have been reading uplifting books and have been in uplifting company. Are we living in an environment of the Spirit? Do we read the Word of God? If so we shall reflect it. Do we keep the company of the brethren? Then we shall reflect the spiritual effect.

This reflection is not merely a matter of mind or memory. The impressions we have gained are made on our very beings, so much so that a man is shaped and fashioned like that with which he comes into contact. Where we cannot change our circumstances, we can use them. It will either be a matter of our circumstances using us or we using them. This is important. We may find one who goes through a trial and the result is a stronger faith in God than ever before, whilst another may pass through similar circumstances in a spirit of questioning, murmuring and complaint, producing a very different result. By

taking Christ's precepts, no matter what experiences we go through, they will all work out for our good; whether painful or pleasant, they can be used for our sanctification. We not only reflect what we receive from our environment and experience, but we receive these impressions into our own beings. This we have referred to as the *Law of Assimilation*.

Now, *influence*: Our study of great men's works, or our contact with individuals, have the effect of changing our lives. David and Jonathan had a great influence on each other. How about the influence of Christ? If the influence of good people is great, and yet they are only a very small part virtuous in comparison with Christ, what would be the influence of Christ on those who make Him their companion? Some may say that there is a difference, that there is something tangible in a friend. But we do not love our friend because of his virtues. So it is with Christ. It is His life and influence that does the work of transforming. It is by the begetting of the Spirit of God that the Christian is in receipt of a power that the world cannot know or comprehend.

There are certain laws governing the Christian. "*Except a man be born from above.*" We must receive a power from above before we can be transformed. There are laws governing the material world, organic and inorganic. A mineral is inorganic and must remain so, for it cannot by any power from within itself cross into even the lowest form of life. Plants are also governed by laws of growth, which are peculiar to themselves. While the mineral cannot reach up into the organic, we find that a plant can reach down its roots into the mineral and by absorbing it, transforms it to part of itself. The mineral has been "born from above" and entered the Kingdom just above it. No law governing the human can make the human spiritual by effort or power from within itself, but God can take hold of us if we yield ourselves to Him, and so we can be transformed into His image. The power is the power of life and we derive that life from the Word of God, for the Word of God is living, and we have been begotten of the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, and by imbibing that Word we are transformed. If we study His Word and character and take His Word into our hearts, we receive a power that changes us from glory to glory.



Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

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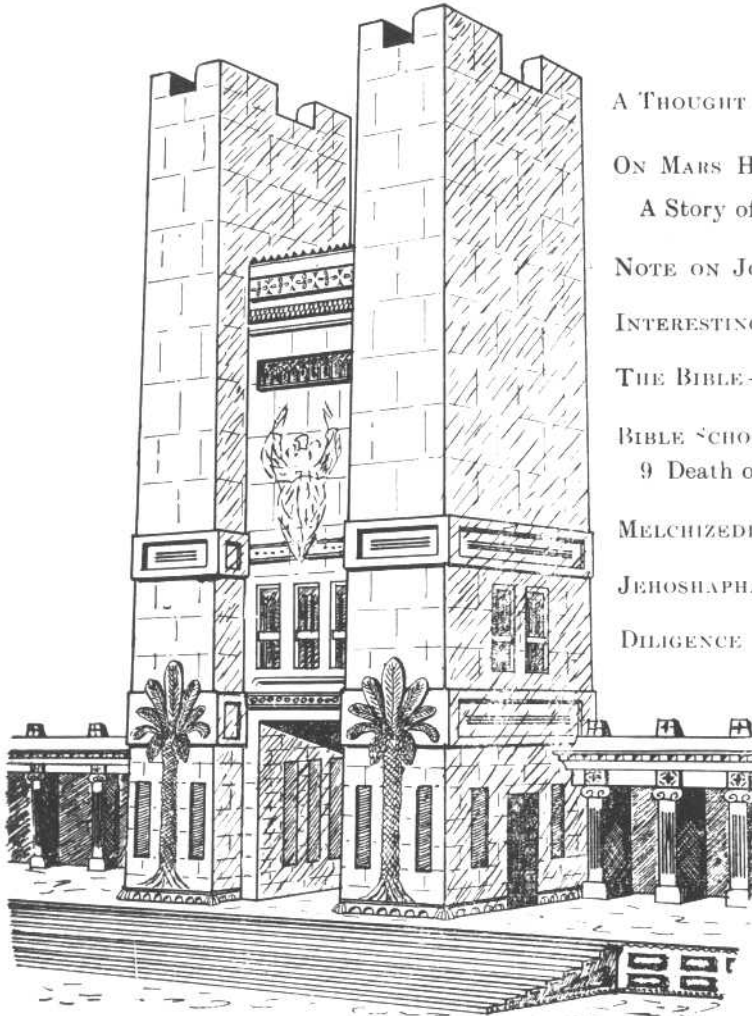
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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### A Thought for the Month

Something like a thousand million years ago—so the geologists say—the seas of the world swarmed with myriads of little creatures called trilobites. In appearance somewhat resembling the common wood-louse, they were almost the only recognisable living animals in the seas; the land was, as yet, quite barren of life. They were lords of creation; no higher form of terrestrial life existed. Lowly as they were, each one was, to borrow a few words from Psalm 139, “fearfully and wonderfully made”. Microscopic examination of their fossils has shown that their eyes, in some species, had as many as six thousand different facets, enabling them to catch every ray of light and see in almost all directions at once. The only plants on which they could live were a few very simple species of grass-like seaweed, for as yet the oceans had none of the submarine plants that they possess today. Sun and moon had only just begun to pierce through the vapour-laden atmosphere which surrounded the earth; the rocks and mountains were as yet hardly cool from the fierce heat of earlier ages when all was volcanic fire and raging tempest; but those little trilobites, the first of living creatures, swarmed and multiplied in the seas as long age succeeded long age, until they gave way to higher and more vigorous forms of life and were seen no more.

“And God said ‘Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life’ . . . and God blessed them, saying, ‘be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas’ . . . and the evening and the morning were the fifth day” (Gen. 1. 20-23). No one knows where the first trilobites came from; there are no earlier simpler forms of such creatures in the fossil remains, no original rudimentary eye from which those marvellous organs of vision with their six thousand separate sections could have been developed. In one age there is no life at all, no evidence that there had ever been any, so that geologists have called it *Azoic*, “lifeless”; then

suddenly the seas are full of these marvelously complex little creatures—one thousand six hundred and seventy-seven distinct varieties of trilobites have been identified—and the world is full of sentient life. A sudden appearance like that bespeaks the active intervention of an intelligent Creator, and that is just what the Genesis story implies. God spake, and life came into being.

Why did God go to work in this fashion? Why all these strange and grotesque creatures that appeared, inhabited and dominated the earth in their day, and then passed out of sight to make way for others? Was this strange and infinitely protracted sequence necessary before God could make man; for man did not appear on the scene until the end of this long procession of varied forms of life? Dr. Eiseley in his book “*The Firmament of Time*” coins a very apt expression relative to man’s coming; “*that strange world into which we have been born—we, compounded of dust and the light of a star*”. The Genesis story tells how God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Compounded of dust and that light which is the life of Divinity! Man, the crown and glory of material creation, the goal towards which all Nature, at the behest of Nature’s God, has been working since the days of those trilobites! But the story does not end there. Another of Dr. Eiseley’s telling phrases is that “*life, unlike lifeless matter, has a point of origin and then travels in a totally unique fashion continuously in the time dimension.*” That may be the scientists’ definition of everlasting life but is none the less a testimony to the credibility of the Christian conviction that men are made for a mighty purpose and this life is but the primary stage in the development of that purpose. As the trilobites were compared with what man now is, so is man now, compared with what he yet shall be in the life of the future.

## ON MARS HILL

No. 11 in a series of  
stories of St. Paul

He stood in the middle of the market place, watching the busy crowds milling around him. There was evidently something very special going on, he thought to himself; judging by the garlands and flowers decorating the many statues of gods and goddesses surrounding him it must be connected with their idolatrous religion. He turned and looked up towards the summit of the Acropolis, where the forty-foot gold and bronze figure of Pallas Athene, the virgin goddess of Athens, gleamed and flashed in the sunlight. His gaze took in the breath-taking loveliness of the Parthenon behind the statue. Jew that he was, he snuffed the beauty of buildings and images and despised the Athenians for their idolatry and their worship of the creations of men's hands. His spirit was stirred within him; a paroxysm of revulsion shook his inner being. The silver trumpets sounded on the still air and the shouting concourse formed itself into an orderly procession, climbing the ascent to the Parthenon where they would pay their respects to Athene the beautiful, goddess of wisdom and of war, protectress of the city which bore her name and which she had made her own.

He looked round the now deserted market-place, averting his eyes quickly from the exquisite flower-crowned figure of Irene, nymph of springtime; resting them for a moment with distaste upon the grim visage of Pluto, god of death and the underworld, turning then to meet the cold austere stare of the bearded and venerable Zeus, father of the gods and goddesses, ruler of the Universe. And his soul within him rebelled at the idolatry of Athens. The hardships of the past few weeks were forgotten and again the zeal of his God burned in his heart, that he might turn these people from the darkness of their ignorance and bring them into sonship with the living God.

Paul had been in Athens, alone, for about a week. He was waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him so that they might resume their missionary work. It was only about five weeks previously that the little party had left Philippi, following the events of the earthquake and the conversion of the Philippian jailer. From Philippi they had travelled, with brief stops at Amphipolis and Apollonia, a hundred miles to Thessalonica, the capital

city of Macedonia. Three weeks in this city had been productive of good results; a number of responsible Jews and a considerable company of Gentiles accepted the faith, including at least three men, Aristarchus, Secundus and Jason, who later on were to figure in evangelical work far removed from Thessalonica—Aristarchus, in fact, ultimately to become a fellow-prisoner with Paul at Rome (Col. 4. 10). But the unbelieving Jews had raised a riot and brought Paul's activities to the notice of the civil authorities under the false accusation of sedition, that Paul was preaching another king, other than Caesar, "one Jesus"; although the city magistrates here manifested a more justly impartial attitude than had their counterparts at Philippi, the brethren judged it expedient to smuggle Paul out of the city before harm befell him. So the little party had trudged fifty miles to the small out-of-the-way town of Berea where they had found a band of earnest Jews and pagans manifesting so exceptional a degree of readiness to listen, and care to verify Paul's message by the written word of God, that their name has been proverbial for true Bible study ever since. They "*received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so*" (Acts 17. 11). One of those converted at this time in this little town was Sopater, who later on served with Paul in the wider field. But again the relentless animosity of Paul's enemies followed him; the Jews of Thessalonica tracked him down to Berea and so, leaving Silas and Timothy to care for the newly formed community there, Paul was hurried to the sea coast and put on board ship for Athens.

Standing now in the agora, the market square or central place of concourse of the city, he was in the very midst of the "wisdom of this age". Rome was the political capital of the world, but Athens was its cultural centre. Here foregathered the wise men, the philosophers, the scientists, all who had something to contribute to the sum of human knowledge. This was the city, of all cities, where Paul might expect to use his education and his gifts of logic and argument to the best advantage in debate with the most intellectual men he was ever likely to meet. He had already had some discussions with the Jews

in the synagogue and with others in the market place. Every day of that short week had been spent in some such activity but so far little or nothing had been gained. Now he turned his attention to the upper crust of Athenian society, those who, living upon the labours of their slaves, "*spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing,*" so finding himself entangled with "*certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoicks*" (17. 18-21).

Of the many schools of thought claiming adherents in Greece perhaps these two were the most prominent. They partook somewhat of the nature of religious sects but they were more like modern rationalist societies than believers in a form of religious faith. The Epicureans were the adherents of Epicurus, a materialistic philosopher who lived in Athens in the early part of the fourth century B.C. Whilst not actually denying the existence of the gods, he claimed that no god existed who was concerned with the welfare or happiness of mankind. The universe, he taught, had come into existence by chance and subsisted without any controlling hand. Pleasure was the chief good and pain the chief evil; men should do good for the sake of good and not because there was any Divine purpose at work in their lives. It is easy to perceive how Paul resisted this hopeless creed. He would be no less tolerant of the Stoics. Stoicism was founded in the fourth century B.C. by a Greek thinker, Zeno, who established a school in Athens where the tenets of his system were inculcated. The philosophy he propounded represented God as an impersonal driving force pervading all the universe and keeping it in operation. The soul of man at death is absorbed into a kind of universal mind which is really the mind of God so that there is no personal future life. The duty of man is to live as righteous and upright a life as possible but he has to do this in his own strength for there is no Supreme Being working to help him. Here again the message Paul had to proclaim brought him into violent conflict with the surmisings of such philosophies.

The result was that the Epicureans and Stoics brought Paul to the court of the Areopagites to have an orderly presentation of his doctrines put forward for their consideration, and this was the highlight of the Apostle's experience in Athens. "*Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears*", they said. "*We would know therefore what these things mean*". This was not just a question of finding a suitable rostrum from which St. Paul could

deliver his discourse. The Areopagites were the supreme judges in Athens of all matters affecting public order and moral issues, with especial emphasis upon religious matters and any open blasphemy against the gods of Greece. The judges had power to order very severe punishments should those arraigned before them be adjudged offenders against the moral or religious code. It is very possible therefore that Paul was, at least in part, on trial for his preaching and if what he had to say was ruled offensive to the Athenian code the least he could expect was summary expulsion from the city.

The nine judges—the wisest and most venerable men in Athens—took their seats, prepared to give close and serious attention to the discourse about to be given. The philosophers who had invited Paul to court—for nothing was of compulsion; all was done in a courteous and dignified manner—gathered together near the speaker. Behind them, and surrounding the central group, a number of curious professors, students, priests and priestesses, a few soldiers, and a crowd of Greek and Jewish city-dwellers, all ready to give quiet attention to what the stranger had to say. Nothing less like the tumultuous riots and prejudiced magistrates Paul had experienced in the provincial towns of Greece could be imagined. This was an orderly concourse and the speaker was to get a fair hearing.

The Court of the Areopagites was held in the open air, on the summit of a rocky eminence known as the Areopagus, or "Mars' Hill". As Paul stood up to commence his exposition, he found that his position afforded a superb view of almost the entire city of Athens. In front of him, across a shallow valley, rose the commanding height of the Acropolis with the gigantic statue of Pallas Athene in the forefront as though challenging him. Paul was about to deny the reality of the goddess. A little to the left rose the magnificent Temple of Zeus the supreme god of Greece. Paul was to say that Zeus was no god at all. Just below him, on the lower slopes of the Acropolis, he looked upon the marble walls and cedar roof of the Odeon, the theatre of Athens, where five thousand spectators at a time could watch the actors presenting the plays of the great dramatists and tragedians of the past—plays which survive and are still presented in our own day. Paul was going to demonstrate something far nearer to truth than the themes of many of those plays. Away in the distance, far to the right, he could just

discern the bare rock face which in modern times has become known as the "prison of Socrates". Well-read man that he was, Paul could hardly have failed at that moment to reflect that in this same place, five centuries previously, Socrates the greatest of the Greek philosophers was condemned to death by the judges for preaching strange gods and a new moral code, and allegedly corrupting the youth of Athens with his teachings. Now Paul himself was going to preach a strange God and a new moral code, and brand all the gods of Greece as the imaginations and creations of men's minds and hands. Would he too be condemned and rejected? He must have wondered for a moment.

"Ye men of Athens" the clear voice rang out over the heads of the attentive multitude, "I perceive that in every respect ye are unusually religious". The A.V. "too superstitious" is a wildly inaccurate translation. The word means much given to piety or religious observance. That opening statement was a courteous acknowledgment of an evident fact, the devotion of the Greeks to their gods. In St. Paul's day most Romans were cynical about their religion in the extreme and the worship of the gods in Rome was perfunctory and a mere formality. In Greece it was different; Paul found an attitude here much more closely resembling the devotion to religious worship with which he was familiar among his own people and he gave his hearers full credit for that.

"For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I beheld an altar with this inscription, 'To the Unknown God.'" The Greek text does not have the definite article here although in many such cases the article is to be understood. It is rather uncertain therefore whether the inscription was "to the unknown God" or "to an unknown god". No such altar has been discovered among the antiquities of ancient Athens but several plaques inscribed "To unknown gods", in the plural, have been found. The precise inscription matters little; it is the use Paul made of it which is significant. "Whom therefore ye worship unknowingly, him declare I unto you." In that masterly statement Paul absolved himself from the possible charge of preaching strange gods in Athens by shewing that they themselves already admitted the existence of a God unknown to them; that same God was now to be declared to them. One can imagine the grave judges leaning forward, their attention caught and held by this unexpected approach. "God that made

the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life, and breath, and all things". This is basic Christian doctrine, the supremacy of God from whom life and all things proceed. The universe did not just happen by chance; neither was it always in existence. Our own scientists now tell us that it had a beginning; there was a time when the universe did not exist. God made it, said Paul, and because He began to create at a time when not one particle of the universe had come into existence He himself is of necessity outside that creation. He does not dwell in any place men can reach or observe. The Greeks believed that the gods dwelt on the top of Mount Olympus, just across the bay from Thessalonica; In later ages men have pictured God as dwelling somewhere in the starry heavens or in a golden land far away in the recesses of outer space. We know now that God cannot be thought of as dwelling anywhere within this material order of things. The world in which the angels stand in the Divine Presence and carry out their duties and activities is on another plane of being, another "wave-length", as we might say. Paul must have known that, when he told the Corinthians that they could attain that world and that resurrection only by means of a "change", an instantaneous transition from one world to another; flesh and blood, the animal man, he wrote, can never as such enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Hath made out of one blood" (not just "of one blood" as in the A.V.) "all nations of men for to dwell upon the face of the earth, having fixed their appointed times and the fixed limits of their habitation". This was strong meat indeed for the cultured Greeks. They prided themselves on being a superior race to the rest of mankind; the gods had especially favoured them and they stood on a higher plane than the barbarians of other nations around them. Not so, says Paul, all men are from one source. It is impossible not to realise that he was referring to the Biblical story of the first human pair. Paul believed in the story of Eden and the Fall with all his heart, and his whole understanding of the Divine purpose for man was based upon that story. God made all men out of one, from one, and He has fixed both the time span of history and the limits beyond which man cannot go in his constant seeking for fresh fields to

explore. It is commonly considered that Paul intended here to indicate that God is responsible for the territorial boundaries of nations; it is questionable whether the expression really does mean that, for those boundaries are by no means "fixed limits" in the sense demanded by this verse. Perhaps Paul rather meant that man by his nature is confined within a particular part of God's whole creation, that part which we know as, and have called, the material universe. No matter how far man may yet range in his space craft and rocket ships he will never, as man, get outside this material universe. The Greeks believed they could under certain conditions pass into the presence of the gods in their fleshly bodies; Paul makes it plain that only by the clothing of the identity, the real man, with a new and spiritual body, a "house from heaven", adapted to the conditions of that other world, may we cross the boundary and enter into the presence of God.

*"That they should seek the Lord . . . though he be not far from any one of us. For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring'."* This was a new thought to his hearers. They had never thought of God as being near and accessible to them. Zeus was a remote and unapproachable deity; when he did deign to visit the earth there was usually trouble rather than blessing. Not that the Greeks were alone in this conception of God; in much later times too many Christians have looked upon the Most High as a God of wrath and vengeance, one to be feared and propitiated rather than loved and served. St. Paul saw deeper than that. He knew God as one seeking by all means possible to recover His erring children to Himself, even to the extent of giving "His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth should not perish but have everlasting life". The believing is necessary if the everlasting life is to be given, for life comes only from God and it is in Him that we live and have our being. Paul explained that also; all life is of God and all life depends upon God. Therefore, says Paul, we are the children, the offspring of God, and with another of his strokes of genius he quoted them their own poets to support his point. The two Greek writers to whom Paul referred at this time are Aratus and Cleanthes. Aratus a native of Cilicia. Paul's own country, Cleanthes a leading member of the Stoics in Athens, both three centuries earlier. It is true that they referred to men as being the offspring of Zeus their

own god, but Paul was able to use their writings to demonstrate that the idea of men looking to God as to a Father was not unknown even among themselves. *"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Deity is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."* The word translated Godhead in the A.V. was used in Greek to denote the Divine nature generally and is better rendered Deity or Divinity. Because we are living, intelligent beings, and God, being our father, is greater than we are, it is absurd to liken Him to images made by the hands of man.

*"And the times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead."*

This was the climax of Paul's discourse. In the execution of His purpose God had in ages past suffered men to go their own ways and make to themselves gods in their own image and likeness as they chose. Now there was to be a change. With the appearance of Jesus Christ the Light of the world there opened a new phase of the Divine purpose. The way to reconciliation with God was manifest through faith in Christ. A "people for God's name" was to be called and chosen from among the nations and prepared for use as the Divine instrument in the conversion of men in the final age of human history, the age of the Second Advent. So, said Paul, in appointing that day in which He will judge the world in righteousness He has also appointed its ruler. Who lived, and died, and whom God raised from the dead, thus giving assurance to all who believe that His promise will be fulfilled. "Repent and be converted; believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." That was the point to which Paul was working; whether he ever got thus far is perhaps problematical for at the mention of a resurrection from the dead the spell was broken. The wise men of Greece could listen thoughtfully whilst Paul debated the nature of God, but when it came to future life by a resurrection from the dead most of them dismissed the whole thing as fantastic nonsense. Some mocked; some, more serious perhaps, offered somewhat half-heartedly to have another session on the matter, but for the present the audition was at an end. The Aeropagites, the nine judges, evidently ruled that there was

nothing in the new doctrine to which Athenians could reasonably take offence, and Paul was free to go where he liked and prosecute his mission as he pleased.

The Apostle must have been bitterly disappointed. Of all the apostles he was the one best fitted by education and natural talent for this opportunity of preaching Christ to the wise men of this world in the intellectual centre of world learning. He had been fully equal to the occasion, speaking to them in the manner to which they were accustomed and shewing himself their equal in learning and in eloquence. He had demonstrated to them how they themselves, unknowingly, had been feeling towards some such understanding of God as he now expounded. Whilst he kept to the well-tried paths of human reasoning and logical argument they listened; when he introduced the realm of faith they turned away. "For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Small wonder that Paul left Athens for Corinth determined, as he told the Corinthians later on, "to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified". "We preach Christ crucified" he said, "unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, the power of God and the

*wisdom of God*".

The effort was not altogether in vain. One of the judges, Dionysius the Areopagite, was sufficiently impressed with Paul's preaching to accept his message and become a believer. There was a woman named Damaris—who she was and what position she held in public life is not stated, but she believed—and a few others. What happened to them afterwards is not known, for they are not mentioned again in the New Testament. No local church was formed, or if it was, no mention was made of that either. Paul never went back to Athens. He revisited, in after years, the other scenes of his ministry in Greece but never Athens. How strange that the very city where no open opposition to his work and message was aroused, where the highest levels of local society were prepared to give him serious consideration, where by all the rules of human reasoning he should have experienced notable success, proved to be the place which appears to have yielded least.

So, without waiting any longer for Silas and Timothy, Paul left Athens and took his journey to Corinth.

(To be continued)

## NOTE ON JOHN 8. 1-11

The incident of the woman taken in adultery is sometimes pointed out as of doubtful authority since it does not appear in the original texts. It is not found in any New Testament Greek manuscript prior to the sixth century. At the same time, the story itself is so clear-cut and detailed that it almost gives its own testimony as being the work of an eye-witness, perhaps recorded by one of the Apostles, and many scholars have decided on its acceptance on this ground alone. Eusebius, the great Church historian of the Fourth Century, mentions the story and quotes it from the writings of Papias, who lived possibly during the old age of John but certainly not long after. Papias claims to have had much discourse with the four daughters of Philip the Evangelist (see Acts 21. 9) among others of the second generation of Christians. It seems fairly evident therefore that the story was, like a number of other fairly well-authenticated acts or sayings of Jesus, current among the early Christians but was either not incorporated in John's original Gospel or, if incorporated, was deleted at some subsequent early date. St. Augustine, the great theologian of the fourth century,

maintained that it had been thus deleted for fear it might encourage laxity of morals. All the evidence therefore goes to show that although the passage is not to be found in any ancient manuscript now existing it is almost certainly a true record of an incident in the life of Jesus and may possibly have appeared in the originals of the Gospels.

## ISRAEL IN EGYPT

A note in the "Jerusalem Post" dated 22nd February forms an interesting commentary on the rapid increase of Israel when Jacob's sons settled in Egypt. The June 1963 instalment of the Bible School on Exodus showed how that increase could well be possible with an average life span of 110 years or more and that four or five generations could well have been born in that time. The note referred to is as follows:

"Ashkelon—Yitzhak Hachamon died here last week-end at the age of 110. He leaves nearly 100 descendants, including great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. He came to this country from Libya and lived in Ashkelon with one of his sons. He was reported to be mentally alert to the last."

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## INTERESTING TEXTS CONSIDERED

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*"In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14. 2).*

The English translators adopted the word "Mansion" which to-day denotes a stately house appropriate only to the wealthy, but originally had a very different meaning. "Mansion" is the English form of a Latin word which was used to describe the rest-houses which the Romans of the First Century built at regular intervals along the great Roman roads to provide refreshment and a night's lodging for official and other travellers. It is well known that in our Lord's day the Roman roads ran in all directions throughout Europe and into Asia, diverging outwards from Rome. One such road connected Rome with London, and the famous Watling Street between Dover and London Bridge, thence onward through the Midlands to Chester, was the extremity of that road. In every part of the Empire, therefore, were these rest-houses or "mansiones". No matter how wild and inhospitable the country around, inside there was light and rest and security. So our Lord, endeavouring to comfort his despairing disciples, assured them that there were other "homes" in the Father's wide domain beside this earth, and that in leaving them He was only going to another "mansione" where He was to prepare a place for them, that where He was they might be also.

It has been discovered in recent years that two stars well known to astronomers are—like our own sun—possessed of planets circling round them. It is estimated by astronomers that a real likelihood exists of the starry heavens containing at this moment more than half a million planets similar to the earth and equally capable of supporting life. It would not require a great stretch of imagination to think that our Lord, with His knowledge of this wonderful material universe, which He created as the Father's "right hand", could have had these potential homes for intelligent beings in mind when He spoke of "many mansions" in His Father's house. But if our understanding of spiritual things is well founded, none of these planets, glorious and beautiful as they might be, can be the future home of Christ's disciples, of we who have left all to follow Him. He has gone to prepare a place for us that is not only higher than all earthly, material things, but is in the highest of all heavens, that we might behold the Father's face in righteousness, and be satis-

fied, when we awake, with His likeness.

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*"And as it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment." (Heb. 9. 7).*

Sometimes quoted as though it referred to the inevitability of final judgment immediately after death, this text really has no connection with human death and the future life at all. The ninth chapter of Hebrews is contrasting the old Levitical sacrifices conducted in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and later in the Temple of Solomon, with the reality, Christ and His sacrifice on man's behalf, toward which they pointed. The chapter shows that every detail of that ancient sacrificial ritual had its corresponding reality. The only difference was that in the type, the High Priest had to offer the sacrifice every year, year by year continually, whereas the Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself once for all. It is clear from the ritual narrative in Lev. 9 and 16 that the High Priest in laying his hands on the sacrificial bullock was declaring in effect that its death on the altar represented his own death; after the blood of the sacrifice had been sprinkled in the Propitiatory in the Most Holy he came forth to the people, arrayed in his splendid priestly vestments, lifted up his hand and blessed the people. Verse 7 draws the analogy between all this and the reality in Christ. *"As it is appointed unto men (the High Priests, successively in their generations) once to die (in the sacrifice of the animals offered), but after this the judgment: (Divine decree as to acceptance of the sacrifice and consequent freedom of the people from sin, manifested in the fire coming down from heaven to consume the burnt-offering). So Christ was once offered (like the bullock of sin-offering) and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time (like the High Priest coming out of the Tabernacle to bless the waiting people) without sin unto salvation".* This "appearing the second time" is of course fulfilled in reality by the long-awaited Second Advent of Christ, for the blessing and salvation of the world.

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Do we begin to wonder why it is that no man yet knoweth "the day and the hour?" Let us then remember that the same all-wise Father Who for our encouragement and strength has given us the signs of the times has by that same wisdom with-holden the times of the signs.

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## THE BIBLE – THE BOOK FOR TO-DAY

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The Bible is the most interesting and instructive collection of writings in existence. Its sixty-six books are the handiwork of at least sixty authors, the latest of whom lived only nineteen hundred years ago and the earliest nearly five thousand years ago. Of all the books that are now before the reading public, this one is the most up-to-date. It presents a full and adequate explanation of life, life's problems and perplexities, and life's possibilities and opportunities. Above all, it points unhesitatingly to One Who is the source of contentment, happiness and peace.

The Bible is the oldest book in existence. It has outlived the storms of forty-five centuries. Men have endeavoured by every means possible to banish it from the face of the earth; they have hidden it, burned it, made the possession of it a crime punishable with death: the most bitter and relentless persecutions have been waged against those who had faith in it; but still the book lives. To-day, while many of its foes slumber in death, and hundreds of volumes written to discredit it and to overthrow its influence are long since forgotten, the Bible has found its way into every nation and people of earth and has been published in more than a thousand different dialects and languages.

The writings of the Bible include law, ethics, poetry, drama, history, travel, prophecy, romance, philosophy, political and social instruction, everything that has to do with the life of man. Its authors were as varied in character as its contents. Kings, emperors and princes; poets, sages and philosophers; fishermen, statesmen and priests; poor men, rich men, preachers, exiles, captains, legislators, judges, men of every grade and class have contributed to the writing of this book.

General Smuts once said:—

*"Whenever I see anything great or anything really moving, my mind always passes into the language of the Old Testament. It is the language of the human heart, the language of the human mind and soul expressing pure human feelings and human emotions, with a universality which appeals to all races and all ages."*

No other sacred writing possesses this appeal. The sacred books of Islam and Buddhism, the two great non-Biblical religious faiths, cannot be compared with the Bible.

They give no detailed history of nations as does the Bible, neither do they pronounce with such authority and reason on the burning question of man, his origin and destiny; and of evil, its origin, the reason for its permission, and its end. The Bible merits the thoughtful consideration of every reflective person. Upon the earth there is distress of nations with perplexity; a voice that speaks with authority is sorely needed. The Bible is that voice. *The Bible is the book for to-day.*

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As a record of history the Bible is unsurpassed. Over two-thirds of its contents are historical narratives. These narratives are authentic and reliable. Prof. Sayce, one of the great archæologists, has said: *"I do not for a moment hesitate to assert that the investigations in Assyria and Egypt thoroughly corroborate the statements of the Old Testament"*; Prof. Yahuda, another authority, declares *"Every archaeological discovery in Palestine and Mesopotamia contemporary with the Bible period bears out unfailingly its historical accuracy."*

A famous minister of the nineteenth century, Dr. H. Grattan Guinness, said this:—

*"The Bible is the chart of history. It affords a panoramic view of the whole course of events from the Creation and the fall of man, to the final judgment and the inauguration of the new Heaven and the new Earth."*

*Without the Bible, history would be a spectacle of unknown rivers flowing from unknown sources to unknown seas; but under its guidance we can trace the complex currents to their springs, and can see the end from the beginning."*

There is evidence in the opening chapters of the Bible that they were written in Mesopotamia about twenty-five centuries before Christ. The history thus commenced was continued by successive writers for some two thousand years and was completed only four centuries before the birth of Christ. In the later decades of the nineteenth century the historical accuracy of these writings began to be questioned by critics, but to-day that scepticism has been proved unjustified, largely in consequence of the decipherment of Egyptian and Asiatic written records and the further discoveries of archæologists. A tremendous amount of excavation has been

undertaken in Mesopotamia, Palestine and Egypt since the war of 1914, and practically every part of Bible history has now been confirmed or illuminated by the results of this work. Numerous books have been published setting forth these facts. *The verdict of twentieth century research is that Bible history is true!*

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There is poetry, drama and philosophy of a high order in the Bible. The Book of Ruth is an idyllic romance of three thousand years ago; the Book of Esther a rare study in human character. The passionate drama of the Book of Job stands in strong contrast to the measured soliloquies of Ecclesiastes, and the staccato epigrams of the Book of Proverbs to the delicate loveliness of the Song of Solomon. The crisp sunlight and shadows of the Book of Acts make it one of the most vividly interesting books of travel ever written, and the Book of Psalms is full of the most inspiring poetry. Each of these books is one to be read slowly and sympathetically as a work of art having its own characteristics and its own peculiar appeal.

The English language has been built up largely around the Authorised Version of 1611; the English love of liberty and justice is due in no small measure to general appreciation of its teachings; the finest of British characteristics must be attributed in considerable degree to three hundred years of consistent reading and preaching of the Book. Very truly, then, was it said by the famous biologist, Prof. T. H. Huxley, some eighty years ago, "*Consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this Book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain; that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of a merely literary form; and, finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilisations, and of a great past, stretching back to the farthest limits of the oldest nations of the world.*"

In the practical things as well as in the cultured tastes of daily life, therefore, the Bible is a sure guide. For good health of body and of mind the Bible contains ample instruction. For guidance in affairs of nations as well as in relations between individuals, the Bible is the best authority. It has inspired the creative genius of writers, poets and painters through the centuries; it is no less effective in

the lives of ordinary men and women who will read and ponder over its pages. *The Bible is the book of daily life.*

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Finally, and above all, the Bible is a Divine Revelation.

Man does not live by bread alone. He enjoys a full and rich life only by consciously seeking to fulfil the Divine will. For all such the Bible is the teacher.

The Bible declares that sin and death are intrusions among men and will one day be eliminated. The first human beings were created sinless, undying, with ability to use the earth's resources for good. Tragically, men forsook the laws of righteousness and allowed selfishness, malice, injustice, to influence their course of life. Inevitably, pain, disease and death followed and have continued until now. Bible history follows the course of that sad progress, and tells of the coming to earth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to redeem the world from its sin and the consequences of its sin. The immediate fruitage of His life and death on earth is the development of the Church—a world-wide assembly of Christians devoted to His service. A further fruitage will become evident when His Kingdom on earth has been established, and under His beneficent control, and the administration of His Church, humanity will be instructed and guided in that better way which will "make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth", abolish disease, poverty, and all the ills from which mankind now suffers, and bring to an end sin and death. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" for "there shall be no more death".

The Bible, then, is the book of the future. Time spent in reading, studying and discussing it will not be time wasted. It cannot fail to broaden the mind and ennoble the character. It cannot fail to make the reader more thoughtful for others, more desirous of serving his fellowmen, more confident of the future. It cannot fail to establish intelligent faith in God, and a conviction that men have a mighty destiny before them, reaching far beyond the limits of things that are now seen and known, and stretching into eternity.

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He who has drawn a conclusion from Scripture which Reason and Conscience imperatively condemn should need no other proof that he has misinterpreted the Word of God.

(Dr. Samuel Cox)

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**BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES**
**EXODUS**
**Part 9 Death of the Firstborn Chaps. 11. 1—12. 15**


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The tenth chapter closes whilst Moses is in audience with Pharaoh over the matter of the ninth plague, the visitation of darkness. Pharaoh had just told Moses to leave the audience-chamber and not come back. "See my face no more" he said "for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die." "Thou hast spoken well" retorted Moses "I will see thy face again no more". The eleventh chapter, if read as continuing the narrative in consecutive order of events, introduces the apparent contradiction of a subsequent interview with Pharaoh following the one at which those words were spoken. There was in fact no further interview; verses 1-3 of chapter 11 constitute a parenthesis in the narrative and refer to something that occurred before the ninth plague. Verse 1 should properly be rendered "Now the Lord had said unto Moses . . ." etc. It was before Moses had gone in to Pharaoh over the ninth plague that God told him about the coming smiting of the firstborns and its consequences, the deliverance of Israel. At the same time Moses was told to instruct the people that they ask of their Egyptian neighbours gifts of gold and silver. The words for "borrow" and "lend" in the Hebrew are equally applicable to the asking for, and receiving of, gifts, and the shade of meaning intended has to be related to the context. It must have been obvious on this occasion that there could be no question of "lending" in the commonly accepted sense of the word since the Egyptians knew perfectly well that the Israelites intended going away and not coming back. Since by this time the Egyptian people generally were terrified of their inconvenient neighbours and wished nothing so much as to see the last of them, favours of this kind would doubtless be granted with alacrity and the Israelites were probably well loaded with the treasures of Egypt by the time they did leave the country. The suggestion sometimes made to the effect that this "borrowing" was a bit of sharp practice on the part of Israel can hardly be sustained; such valuables as they did acquire must be held to have been gifts—almost bribes, maybe; anything to placate these people who had so powerful a God and to get them out of the country.

The rest of chapter 11 is then, logically, a continuation of the interview with Pharaoh.

"I will see thy face again no more," Moses had said, but that was not his last word. Standing stern-faced and resolute before the angry monarch, he pronounced the dread sentence the Lord had previously authorised him to pass. "Thus saith the Lord, 'About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh . . . and all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and shall bow themselves to me, saying, 'Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee'; and after that I will go out'."

That did end the interview. What Pharaoh said in reply, if he said anything at all, is not recorded. It seems from verse 8 that he did not get the chance. According to that verse, as soon as Moses had spoken, "he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger". And true to his word, he never saw the face of Pharaoh again. The die was cast, the obduracy of Pharaoh had made the last dread tragedy inevitable, and Moses was finished with him.

Why did Moses manifest "great anger", so unlike his usual peacable and unruffled disposition, at this particular time? There is nothing like it recorded in any of the eight previous occasions. It could not have been on account of Israel for he knew that the deliverance was now nigh at hand. There was no question of frustration or disappointment over the progress of events. The matter was out of his hands now and in the hand of God. He had only to deliver the final message and walk out, knowing that his work was almost immediately to be crowned with success and the Exodus become a reality. His anger could not have had anything to do with that. Was it then because Moses knew now that nothing could save all those firstborn sons of the Egyptians from sudden death and he was sick at heart at the prospect. The people of Egypt, the nobility and officials at the royal court, were already anxious to let the Israelites go and had in fact been urging Pharaoh to give way. That is evident from chap. 10 vs. 7. Only the obstinacy of one man stood in the way, and because of that, all Egypt must suffer this cruel affliction. The character of Moses is revealed in the Pentateuch as that of an essentially kindly and tolerant man, albeit stern and even ruthless where the enemies of his God or the nation he was creating were

concerned. Many of those Egyptian parents who were to lose their firstborns had been his own personal friends in days of youth forty years earlier, when as the adopted son of the Pharaoh Queen Hatshepsut he had moved freely among them. He thought of the tragic times when the newborn sons of his own people were destroyed at birth by the cruelty of this Pharaoh's grandfather, the renowned Thothmes I, and felt quick concern for all those Egyptians who were to suffer the same way. In a violent upsurge of emotion at what he now knew must come he turned his back upon his callous opponent and "*went out from Pharaoh in a great anger*".

The stroke did not fall at once. The expression in ch. 11, 4 "*About midnight will I go out . . .*" does not mean that the Angel of Death was to visit Egypt that same night; only that the visitation would occur at midnight. Chapter 12 makes it clear that several days, at least a week, elapsed while the people were receiving instructions and making preparations for the great event. It was now April, the tenth month of the Egyptian year and the seventh month, Nisan, according to the Hebrew method of reckoning. Now there was to be a change; the month in which the Exodus took place was to be accounted the first month of the year. That was the first instruction Moses gave them. (ch. 12, 2). For ever after, Israel counted Nisan the beginning of the year for all religious matters and retained Tisri, (October) the original first month, for secular considerations. On the tenth day of this month Nisan, said Moses, each family was to select a choice year-old lamb or kid from the flocks and care for it until the fourteenth day. On the evening of that day they were to kill the lamb, smear its blood on the doorposts and "lintels"—properly a small look-out port above the doorway of Egyptian houses of the period—and partake together of the flesh, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, in a solemn ceremonial feast. They were to partake attired as if ready for a journey and they were to remain inside their houses all night, for during that night the Angel of Death would come down upon Egypt and in every house except those marked with the blood the firstborn son would die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of his humblest subject. But the angel would pass over those houses bearing the sign of the blood, without harming any within.

Thus was born the ceremony of the Passover, an observance which made Israel unique among the nations and subsists to-day, a liv-

ing testimony to the reality of those events so long ago transpiring. No existing national ceremonial or memorial in any other nation is so old as the Passover; for more than three thousand years it has been repeated annually in every part of the world where the descendants of the people of Israel are to be found. The absolute truth of the Exodus from Egypt is evidenced by the continued existence of this ceremony; there is no doubt that the events which gave it birth must have happened as related.

The 12th chapter recounts in full the Lord's instruction to Moses and Aaron respecting the detail of the Passover ceremony. The command to keep it as an ordinance for ever was included and that command has been faithfully obeyed. The reference in vs. 7-20 to the "seven days of unleavened bread" following the feast, during which no leaven might be used in their food, the first and seventh days additionally to be marked by cessation of all labour and made holy to the Lord, is interesting as probably marking the introduction to Israel of a seven-day week with one day, the Sabbath, a rest day. The Egyptian calendar at that time was based on a ten day week and no rest day at all. It is likely that this part of the instruction was intended for future Passovers; its implementation at the moment of the Exodus would not have been very practicable. Further stipulations (vs. 24-27, 43-49) required the people to instruct their children in the meaning of the ceremony and the details of their escape from Egypt—to this day at each Passover a lad formally asks why they keep this feast and is answered by one of his elders in traditional words—and provided for the position of non-Israelites among them. Such could become adopted into the commonwealth of Israel by undergoing the rite of circumcision and were then entitled to partake; otherwise no foreigner or stranger was allowed to share in the ceremony.

The instruction given, "*the people bowed the head, and worshipped. And the children of Israel went away, and did as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron; so did they.*" (ch. 12, 27-28). It is evident that the entire community was now fully persuaded that the promise was to be fulfilled and their deliverance effected. There were no objections and no doubts. A few days must have elapsed whilst word was passed throughout Goshen to everyone of the two to three million Israelites involved and very busy days they must have been. It says much for the organising

skill of Moses and his lieutenants that so great a number of people at so short a notice should, on the evening of the fourteenth day of Nisan, the April moon being at the full, in the year now dated 1440 B.C., be quietly gathered in their houses attired as for a journey, the slain lambs on the tables before them and the doors marked with the blood, awaiting the tremendous event prophesied more than four centuries earlier to Abraham. *"Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs . . . that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge, and they shall come out with great substance . . . in the fourth generation they shall come hither again."* (Gen. 15. 13-16). In many a shuttered and bolted house those words must have been recited, and prayers for deliverance ascend to God, as they waited in faith for the Lord to come down . . .

*"And it came to pass that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon. And Pharaoh rose up in the night . . . and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead."* (ch. 12. 30).

Perhaps Pharaoh had not really believed that this would happen. Blinded, maybe, by his own egotism and arrogance he might have reasoned that every one of the nine plagues had been lifted; the damage they had done was grievous, but not irremediable. The God of Moses had shown Himself possessed of marvellous powers in the world of Nature and had used those powers considerably to increase the magnitude of visitations which on a smaller scale were by no means unknown in Egypt. But to single out of all Egypt's multitudes the firstborn son of each family and encompass the sudden death of all such simultaneously on the stroke of midnight: Pharaoh knew of no gods having such power and he had dismissed Moses' final denunciation, a little uneasy perhaps but dismissed it nevertheless, as the despairing defiance of a defeated man. Now he knew better, and it was too late!

The literal historicity of the death of the firstborns is the only explanation of the existence of the Passover feast. The very centre and core of the whole arrangement, and of much of Israel's religious organisation in after years, rests upon the fact that all the firstborns of Egypt did die under the hand of God on that fateful night. Without that dread happening the Passover could have had no meaning and would never have been repeat-

ed. However inexplicable the proceeding—and the singular nature of the selection, first-born only in every house except those marked with the blood, rules out every explanation save direct action by Divine intervention—it must have happened in the fashion described.

Egyptian history is silent on this event and the name of Pharaoh's firstborn son is not known. But there is one significant fact. The son who did succeed him was Thothmes IV, and he is well known in history. In 1886 the Egyptologist Maspero, engaged in clearing the sand which buried the lower half of the Sphinx, the huge half man, half animal monument situated near the Great Pyramid of Ghizeh, discovered between the great paws of the figure a small altar with an inscribed tablet, hitherto unknown. When deciphered, the tablet was found to be the record of a remarkable dream experienced by Thothmes IV when a youth, before his accession. It seems that the lad had been out hunting with his servants, lain down in the shadow of the Sphinx to rest, and fallen asleep. In his dream the Sphinx-god spoke to him and promised that if he would clear away the sand which even then partially buried the monument then he should one day become Pharaoh of Egypt. Upon awaking, Thothmes was so impressed that he carried out his part of the bargain; when he did succeed to the throne he erected the tablet in the place where he had slept. The significant thing about this is that Thothmes was evidently not the eldest son of Amen-hotep or there had been no need to make this bargain to ensure his succession. In Egypt the eldest son invariably succeeded his father as Pharaoh. The obvious inference is that for a reason not stated in Egyptian history the eldest son of Amen-hotep died before his father so that the younger one succeeded. That is strong supporting evidence for the truth of the Biblical account.

How does this wholesale destruction of firstborn, with all the anguish and mental suffering it must have involved, appear in relation to the Divine character? God is love and these slain firstborns were the creation of His hands. He had given them life; now in a moment He deprived them of life. Was it not possible for God, who has all power, to deliver His people without involving the sudden death of probably several hundred thousand innocent firstborns? The answer to such questions is not easy; it involves the whole philosophy of the permission of evil. To say that God is the giver of life and has

every right to withdraw life at His pleasure is not a complete nor a satisfactory answer. It is true that in past times God had visited whole peoples with judgment on account of their depravity—the antediluvians, the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, and so on—but there is no evidence that all the slain firstborns were depraved. And what then of their eternal future? The situation is only tolerable when it is understood that this life is only one phase of man's development into the Divine ideal. The death of the firstborns was not an irreparable loss; they did not die without hope; there is more yet to come. In the words of a famous theologian, Dr. Farrar, Archdeacon of Westminster, "*man's destiny stops not at the grave; many who knew not Christ here will know him there. In some way or other, before the final judgment, God's mercy may reach them and the benefits of Christ's atonement be extended to them beyond the grave.*" And it might well be that necessity existed to demonstrate at this time the fact that all men are members one of another, that for reasons which are too deep for the human mind to grasp the evil of one man cannot but have its repercussion upon others. The death of the firstborn was primarily the consequence of Pharaoh's hardness of heart. Was this terrible outcome a measure of the fearful gulf which Pharaoh had created between himself and every right thought and action. As Dr. Farrar said again in another place "*It is impossible for us to estimate the hardening effect of obstinate persistence in evil, and the power of the human will to resist the law and reject the love of God.*"

Pharaoh gave in. Before morning dawned he had sent messengers to Moses and Aaron and bidden them muster all Israel and get out of Egypt. It is not necessary to read vs. 31 to imply that he spoke personally to Moses. He had already seen the prophet for the last time. Probably his officials went post haste to Moses' residence with the royal mandate. According to vs. 33 they were anxious to expedite the people's departure, fearing yet further visitations of Israel's God. "*We be all dead men*" they said. The sooner Pharaoh's edict was acted upon the better.

The implication of ch. 12. vs. 34, 39, 42 and 51 is that the great migration commenced that same night. The people had no time even to prepare food for the journey before leaving their homes. The smiting of the firstborns occurred at midnight; affairs must have moved fast if the people or even a proportion of them were on the move by 6.0 a.m. and this

is what the account implies. It is certain that every detail of the move had been organised beforehand. Even so it was not humanly possible for the command to be transmitted throughout the land of Goshen, more than a hundred miles in extent, within an hour or so, unless a system of signalling such as the use of beacon fires had been already arranged. It is evident that all Israel fully believed that this time the word would be given and they were ready. Verse 37 indicates a general gathering at the town of Succoth on the southern border of Goshen preparatory to an organised move toward the Red Sea. The verse states that they journeyed from Rameses to Succoth; it is likely that the Israelites in and around the capital city of Rameses had the news first and were early on the move. Those scattered throughout the country districts would be informed a little later and then join the travelling bands. It might have been several days or even weeks before all Israel was congregated together at Succoth and the real journey into the wilderness began. But to Moses the moment for which he had planned and laboured these forty years past came when the Egyptian messengers stood before him in the darkness of that Passover night with their royal master's urgent plea "*Rise up . . . get you forth . . . and go:*"

(To be continued)

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Travellers we needs must be, since here we have no continuing city; but it is left to us to determine whether as aimless wanderers we will journey along the road of life or whether it shall be as pilgrims that we will take that road. The pilgrim is he who has the wishing heart; who has seen a vision of the City of God and has willed to seek it along the pilgrim's way. His heart like a compass is ever pointing to that city of his fondest hopes.

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Light enters the smallest opening accessible to it. It searches out the recesses that would otherwise remain dismal and dark, thus penetrating the gloom. It is a fact disclosed by science that it lays hold of the lurking germs of disease whether in the home or in the human system. Of him who came as the world's light, such is his ministry. Instead of sin fastening upon him it could not even stand in his presence.

## MELCHIZEDEK KING OF SALEM

Light on an  
ancient story

The identity of Melchizedek, King of Salem (Gen. 14, 18-24), has been for long a subject of casual speculation, and the very brevity of Scriptural allusion to this personage has afforded opportunity for more than one flight of fancy. The statement in Hebrews 7, 3 that he was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life," has led some Christian writers to identify him with the Son of God Himself, spending a period of time upon earth in garb of human flesh many centuries before He was born of Mary. Jewish tradition, a little more rationally, declared that he was Shem the son of Noah. Some of the Early Fathers—and some later commentators too—tried to establish a case for the mysterious priest-king to whom Abraham paid tithes after the defeat of Chedorlaomer being Enoch returned to earth after his death.

All these speculations have been dissolved by research, which in recent years has so illuminated the Old Testament that the mystery has been stripped from the personality of this man, so wonderfully honoured in being made a type of that everlasting priesthood which is characteristic of our Lord's Millennial glory. Were it not for this inspired usage of the little scrap of history recorded in Genesis 14, Melchizedek would have been as unknown to Christians as is another occupant of the same exalted office half a millennium afterwards. How many can recall, without recourse to Bible or Concordance, what the Scripture has to say about Adonizedek, King of Jerusalem? Yet there is much more said about this latter king than Melchizedek himself.

The story opens at the time when the armies of the east invaded Canaan, taking Lot among their prisoners, and Abraham, following and defeating them, returned in triumph from Northern Palestine along the Jordan valley on his way back to Hebron. He came, says the narrative, to Salem. The full ancient native name was Uru-Salem, the city of peace. That name transliterated into English gives us the familiar Jerusalem. No one knows just how old is the Holy City of our faith—it was already in existence when recorded history began.

*"And Melchizedek King of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest*

*of the Most High God. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram, of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand. And he (Abraham) gave him tithes of all"* (Gen. 14, 18-20).

That is all that the Scriptures tell us about this mystic personage, yet how full of detail the brief statement! It is worthy of note that this verse is the first place in the Bible where the word "priest" is mentioned. In all the history of the days before Abraham there is no mention of a priest; here is presented a kingly priest—a priest upon his throne. Note also that Abraham acknowledged the authority of this man, superior to himself, for he rendered him tithes of his spoils of war. Thirdly, this man, although not of the chosen family which had been called out of Ur of the Chaldees to become a great nation, the people of God, nevertheless acknowledged the same God as did Abraham. This is the more noteworthy when, upon reflection, it is realised that Melchizedek reigned as king over a land which was about to be promised to Abraham himself, and the kingship of Melchizedek must perforce one day come to an end.

Abraham, having rendered his obeisance and his tithes, went on his way to his home at Hebron, and thereafter Melchizedek disappears from history except for one solitary allusion in Psalm 110, 4: *"The Lord hath sworn and will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek!"* This text speaks not of a suffering Christ—not of the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, led as a lamb to the slaughter (Isa. 53, 7). This hundred and tenth Psalm speaks of a victorious King, a triumphant Priest, one ruling in the midst of His enemies, and bringing all into subjection to His sway that He might become to them a dispenser of Divine favour. He is a Royal Priest having all power both to rule men and heal them, and so accomplish all God's good purposes for them. That is why the Psalmist's mind went back to a royal priesthood which existed centuries before that of Aaron, one which served not with *"offering and burnt offerings and offerings for sin"* (Heb. 10, 8), picturing only sacrifice and reconciliation begun, but a priesthood that dispensed bread and wine, ruling in

kingly majesty and symbolising blessing to men and reconciliation completed. That is why the Psalmist, with rare inspiration, declared in rapturous words: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." How appropriate the name! "*Melchi*"—a king. "*Zedek*"—righteousness. A king of righteousness ruling over the City of Peace, an apt picture of our King and His earthly Kingdom!

Until quite recent years nothing whatever was known about this mysterious Royal Priesthood of Abraham's day, apart from the scanty references in the Scriptures. Christian teachers believed that Abraham lived an alien in a totally strange and idolatrous heathen land. That the worship of God could exist anywhere apart from Abraham and the chosen seed was hardly suspected, much less believed, and the incident of Chedorlaomer and Melchizedek was regarded by many as a fable, having no basis of fact in genuine history.

To-day all that is changed. Discoveries made within the last thirty-five years have definitely established that in the times of Abraham, of Jacob and of Joshua there was a system of belief and worship in Canaan which acknowledged and served the "Most High God", a system corrupted with crudities of belief with which Abraham and his children were never encumbered, but nevertheless constituting an intelligent worship of One God as distinct from the idolatrous superstitions of the peoples around. It seems reasonable to believe that others beside Abram had some understanding of the primitive faith of Noah and Shem, and, whilst Abram was a child in Ur of the Chaldees, there must have been other men in other lands, sprung from the common stock, who carried with them some tolerably clear knowledge of the God of Shem, of Noah, of Enoch, and the faith of past times. Abraham was selected to advance the true knowledge of God in orderly development through that nation which should spring from his loins, but when he came into Canaan he found already a holy city, a priesthood, and a worship which he would readily recognise as being in honour of God Most High, and to the High Priest of that faith he made due acknowledgment.

From the day of Abraham a veil is drawn across the Holy City and its affairs, and Jerusalem is mentioned no more until, many centuries later, Joshua led the hosts of Israel across Jordan into the promised land. As the warriors swarmed up the roads from Jericho they found a king in Jerusalem—and it came

to pass when Adonizedek, King of Jerusalem, had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it (Joshua 10. 1), that Adonizedek sent the other kings of Southern Canaan a summons to combine for united defence. Here was a man of evident authority among the petty kings of Canaan. His name—reminiscent of his illustrious predecessor—*Adonizedek*, "Lord of righteousness." He comes on the stage only to disappear as quickly, for after the historic encounter related at length in Joshua 10 he was captured with his confederates and put to death.

From the Bible alone there would be little beyond the similarity of name to justify the thought that here in the days of Joshua the priest-kings were still ruling and exercising the duties of their exalted office, but the voice of the monuments has in these days made itself heard, and shown that in the days of Joshua, as in those of Abraham, the Most High God was still worshipped in Jerusalem. In the year 1929 a notable discovery was made at Ras Shamra, on the sea-coast of Northern Palestine. A large number of inscribed tablets came to light, proving, by various evidences, to have been written about the time of the Exodus, and throwing an entirely new light upon the religious beliefs and ceremonials of Canaan at that time. A vast amount of information has been obtained from these tablets, all tending to show that whilst the Children of Israel were marching through the wilderness of Sinai on the way to the land of promise, the worship of the "Most High God" was widely prevalent in Canaan, with a distinctive ceremonial, one that contained many features reminiscent of the later ritual. Side by side with that gross idolatry and worship of many gods against which Israel was warned by Moses there existed also a form of worship which approached very near to that of the Israelites. It may well be that Melchizedek and Adonizedek were but two representatives of a long line of priestly kings who reigned in Jerusalem and kept the faith of the Most High alive through all those years.

These "Ras Shamra tablets" also illumined and explained another archæological enigma. In 1877 a peasant woman at Tel-el-Amarna in Egypt had stumbled upon one of the most important discoveries of the nineteenth century, a large number of tablets which were found to be the "Foreign Office" correspondence of the Egyptian government during the time when Joshua and the hosts of Israel were invading Canaan and subduing

the Canaanites. These tablets, which were not completely and accurately deciphered until 1915, reveal that during the period of the Exodus Canaan was a land in nominal subjection to Egypt, each of its towns having a local ruler or an Egyptian governor, whose jurisdiction extended to the country around him, these governors rendering their allegiance to the Pharaoh of Egypt. In short, Canaan was an Egyptian province. Now among all these letters from the various petty kings of Canaan there are many written by one Abdi-Khibba, King of Jerusalem, who constantly claims that he holds his position not by permission of the Egyptian power, like the other kings about him, but by decree of the Most High. From these letters, and from the frequent mention of his name in documents written by other Canaanite dignitaries, it is known that Abdi-Khibba ruled Jerusalem in his own right in much the same fashion as did Melchizedek centuries previously. This king's constant lament to the Egyptian Pharaoh is that the "Khabiri" were threatening his city and country and that unless help soon came, the invaders would overrun the land. Who these "Khabiri" were was long a matter of mystery but in recent years it has been generally agreed that they were the invading Israelites under Joshua, in process of subduing the land. Abdi-Khibba's letters break off abruptly, still pleading for the help that never came, and the sequel to the story is recorded in another of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, a despatch from one Suyardata, an Egyptian official sent to Canaan to report upon the political condition of the province, in which he reported the news of the capture of Abdi-Khibba and the fall of his city at the hands of the "Khabiri"—the Israelites.

There seems little doubt that Abdi-Khibba was the last of the Melchizedek line of priest-kings. There is a possibility that Adoni-zedek was the same individual mentioned in the tablets as Abdi-Khibba, the former being his Canaanite name and the latter his Egyptian title—although on the other hand it may be that when Adoni-zedek was slain by Joshua, Abdi-Khibba succeeded him as priest-king of Jerusalem, ruling whilst the Israelites were actually engaged in conquering the land and being finally captured by them and slain as recorded in the Tel-el-Amarna letters.

So ended the Melchizedek priesthood, a line of royal priests reigning in Jerusalem from the days of Abraham to the time of Joshua. For over half a millennium the faith and worship of God Most High was kept alive in a

land where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in succession were strangers and pilgrims—and when in the fulness of time the developing plan of God demanded a new revelation of His Will. A hardy and virile people, sons of the desert, came in with the enthusiasm and confidence engendered by their Covenant with God, and before them the old primitive Canaanitish worship waxed old and vanished away.

Quite evidently the fall of Jerusalem recorded by Suyardata was not followed up by the Israelites, for in Joshua 18. 28, the city is mentioned by a new name, "*Jebusi*"—the city of the Jebusites. The old proud name—the city of peace—had vanished with the fall of its priest-kings, and not until the time of David, three or four centuries later, was its name restored. I Chron. 11. 4-7 tells of the final capture of the city and of David making it his capital, restoring to it the original name by which it has ever since been known. There is an appropriateness in this, for David was a prototype of that greater Melchizedek who shall come in glory and power, and upon a greater throne than that of David, to rule as King and Priest in the New Jerusalem.

*"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually"* says the writer to the Hebrews (Heb. 7. 3). These are the words which have mystified so many. How could this man Melchizedek be without parents, having no beginning nor ending, unless he be identified with God himself? The careful student will perceive, however, that the whole reference in Hebrews to this personage is symbolic or typical. The writer is calling to mind one little episode, that related in Genesis 14, and views it as an isolated picture upon which he can build his type. Melchizedek steps on to the stage, and steps off. Of what went before or of what came after, we are in ignorance; but while he stood there in the King's Dale, his holy city of Salem in the background, Abraham and his followers before him rendering willing tribute, and as he ministered bread and wine and raised his hands in blessing, he typified One who in the power of an endless life, abiding a priest continually, is abundantly able to save those who come unto God by Him. Abraham and his followers pictured all mankind, bowing the knee in glad and willing submission to their new king. The King's Dale; surely that foreshadows Paradise restored, the glorified earth where the willing

and obedient shall rejoice in the glory of God's grace, Salem in the background pictures the New Jerusalem in its descent from heaven to earth, and that venerable figure bearing bread and wine, clad in garments betokening at once royal glory and priestly dignity, the Lord Jesus Christ, no longer a High Priest after the order of Aaron—that is all in the past, in His day of humiliation—but a Royal Priest whose priesthood shall never end. "They truly," says the same writer again, speaking now of the Aaronic priests, "were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." The priest-

hood of Aaron was a dying priesthood, and it could picture only sacrifice and suffering, things which one day must pass away for ever. They could never rightfully picture the everlasting glory of Christ. "But this man," triumphantly now, "because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." The glory of this wonderful type will be fully revealed when Christ, the Prophet, Priest and King, accompanied by His glorified Church, comes forth to meet mankind, bearing bread and wine, and in the beautiful surroundings of the King's Dale gives them His blessing—the blessing of the Most High God.

### JEHOSHAPHAT'S SHIPS — A Note on 2 Chron. 20. 36

An incident at Eilat (Elath), the southernmost extremity of Israel, a few weeks ago, illustrates a casual word in 2 Kings 22. 48 and 2 Chron. 20. 36. Good king Jehoshaphat had built a fleet of ocean-going vessels, "ships of Tarshish", at Ezion-geber on the Red Sea, to go to Ophir for gold. But, says the chronicler, they never set sail because they were wrecked at Ezion-geber. Eliezer the prophet told Jehoshaphat that the calamity was a retribution from the Lord because he had allied the godless king Ahab to be associated with him in the project. Be that as it may, the ships were wrecked before they set out.

The Israelite port of Ezion-geber, used for Israel's overseas trade to Arabia, Africa and India from the days of King Solomon onward (1 Kings 9. 26, 2 Chron. 8. 17), stood within a few miles of the modern town and port of Eilat at the head of the Gulf of Akaba. Eilat is Israel's essential southern outlet to the world's sea-routes and just as important to modern Israel as was Ezion-geber to their forebears in the days of Solomon and Jehoshaphat. The "Jerusalem Post" in February last reported an unusually violent storm at Eilat sweeping in from the usually calm and placid

sea, with high winds and towering sixteen-foot waves smashing the harbour installations, capsizing a floating crane, and destroying the fleet of glass-bottomed boats which normally take tourists out to view the beauties of the sea-bed. The "Post" explained that Eilat is unprepared for this kind of storm; it is an extremely rare meteorological phenomenon which is caused by atmospheric conditions. The wind at Eilat usually blows consistently from the north, down a gigantic funnel formed by high mountain ranges on either side of the deep ravine which stretches from the Dead Sea down to Eilat. Should the northern part of Israel experience a sudden wave of cold air, however, and the barometric pressure fall to a lower figure than is subsisting at Eilat with its tropical climate, a great rush of air from the Gulf of Akaba surges northward, whipping up the sea into huge waves and creating tempestuous winds, with consequent damage to anything in its path.

This is evidently what happened at the time King Jehoshaphat's ill-fated expedition was about to set out from the same spot. The modern incident is an unwitting testimony to the reliability of the Biblical account.

### DILIGENCE

A letter to the  
Household of Faith

Those who are striving to attain victory in the "race set before us," realise the winning of a race means effort—enthusiastic effort, diligent effort, prompted by deeprooted heart convictions. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. 4. 23). In this text Solomon uses the Hebrew word *Mishmar* which refers to a guard, a deposit, a usage; an example; watch; prison ward. Cook translates this: "Above all

keeping, keep thine heart." Rotherham and Leiser translate it, "Above all that must be guarded, keep thine heart."

The outflowing of heart promptings may be likened to the flow of water from a spring. It is the desire to keep this overflow pure, healthful, refreshing. The springs of the East, like their water-wells, were jealously guarded. A stone was frequently rolled across the entrance and the opening closed. A closed

spring was called a sealed spring and thus became a type of all that must be most diligently guarded. The inner thoughts, the thoughts of the heart, are like a spring of water which must be kept pure to be effectively used by the Lord. "*Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth.*" (Col. 3. 5). "*For they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*" (Gal. 5. 24).

Keeping the heart implies more than physical action. It means the putting on the mind or will of Christ in faithful performance of the will of the Father. The mind of Christ lifts us to the better things we seek. In proportion as we heed the teachings of our Lord, we grow nearer to God and His likeness. We become meek, gentle, ever increasing in the fruits of the Holy Spirit and in the character likeness of Jesus our Messiah and Example. As we apply the teachings of Divine love we find our efforts assailed by inadequacy of the flesh. Mental and spiritual vigilance, diligent, continuous effort is required if success is to be attained. The sooner we comprehend this great truth, the sooner we overcome our complacency, the better it will be for us. Perhaps this is because we wrestle not against flesh and blood alone, but against the Devil himself. (Eph. 6. 11, 12). "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.*" (1 Pet. 5. 8). Therefore, "*When thou goest with thine adversary before the magistrate — give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him*" (Luke 12. 58). Satan is the "accuser of the brethren". (Rev. 12. 10). This expression, "give diligence", is exceedingly old. It is not a Latinism, but is found in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri of the Second century before Christ. It means to work hard, to do your best. Rotherham translates this text, "*Take pains to get a release from him.*" We know this can be done through the grace given us by our Lord.

The Lord's people occupy different places in the Body of Christ. We differ in opportunity, in ability, in understanding. But whether one is a Thomas, a Peter, Paul or John, in ministry to others we are urged to exercise simplicity, diligence, cheerfulness. (Rom. 12. 8). The sixth to the tenth verses of the twelfth chapter of Romans are well worth study in this connection. Even translators differ in their understanding of the Greek. Rotherham says, "*He that ruleth with diligence,*" while the Syriac reads, "*The presider (or the one*

standing at the head) *with dexterity.*"

The word used for diligent in the Greek is *Ergasia*. The same word is used in 2 Cor. 8. 7 and is translated by Bullinger "In all diligence or in all carefulness." Rotherham gives us, "in all earnestness," but the Diaglott is still different, "But as you abound in everything, in faith, and in the Word; and in knowledge, and in all earnestness, and in your love also." The gift of our all to the service of our God. All brothers and sisters in Christ are designated leaders in some capacity. So many of them keep their lamps trimmed and burning. (Mat. 25).

In "Hebrews" the Apostle Paul had been speaking to the Church as a whole, but in Heb. 6. 11 he urges each one individually diligently to seek the full assurance of faith and hope that they may inherit the promises. The Syriac reads, "*And we desire, that each one of you may show this same activity, for the completion of your hope.*" The warning is that after Jesus as Messiah, if we go back to the Mosaic Law and Judaism, we cut ourselves off (Gal. 5. 4). By rejecting the Lord we put Him to open shame; thus Paul's warning remains as a solemn admonition to all who profess to believe.

"*Provide in your faith, honesty, virtue, purity.*" (2 Pet. 1. 5). If you have God's gifts, prove you have them by using them. "Yea, and for this reason", God began His good work in us. We must build on, "contributing all diligence". It is only a little we can do at best. It is only by diligent culture, Christian graces can grow. It is in this diligence we make our offering, while God works in us to both will and do His good pleasure. (Phil. 2. 13). Thus it is, God's gift of faith must be evidenced by our fruits of faith. Energy, diligence must be exhibited in the life of the consecrated. "*In your faith exercise virtue and in your virtue knowledge.*"

"*Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence*" because, by the constant possession and increase of God's graces we become more fruitful. Our increase in diligent zeal may be attributed to our intelligent use of the graces God has already given. As we increase our knowledge and apply our hearts to God's beneficent plans and purposes, we will be able to produce greater fruitage. Our calling and election must be made sure. The Diaglott rendering of 2 Pet. 1. 10 is, "more earnestly endeavour to make your calling and election sure", while the Syriac reads, "be exceedingly diligent.

Again we have the admonition by the

saintly Jude. Dr. Cook translates Jude 3, "*Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you and exhort you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*" In this case the word diligence is used to translate the Greek word *Spoude*, meaning dispatch, eagerness, earnestness, carefulness, diligence, instant haste. Diligence here indicates the writer's chief care was to warn the Church against false teachers. The Diaglott gives it, "making all haste", while the Syriac says, "I take all pains to write".

Earnestly to contend for the faith conveys the thought of enthusiastic diligence. Stress should be laid on our sincerity, our honesty in being instant in service, both in season and out of season to us. We are to serve those needing us, not only when it is convenient, but also at times when it puts us to a lot of trouble. At all times we are to diligently and earnestly defend the truth as given us by the Scriptures. Our contending is to be FOR the faith and not ABOUT the faith. The diligent, earnest contention which our Father will approve is prompted by a desire to have whatever the Scriptures teach, irrespective of preconceived ideas or personal preference. In all of our activities for the truth we should diligently manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit of Christ—gentleness, brotherly kindness, spiritual understanding, godly love and affection for those who are struggling to master self and progress in the narrow way of righteousness.

Again we have the urge to prompt intense effort in 2 Tim. 4. 9. Paul was nearing the end of his earthly ministry. He needed the prompt assistance of Timothy. He wrote, "Do thy diligence to come unto me." How strange we should put off for some more convenient time any service we can render to any of the Lord's people in assisting the efficiency of their ministry. The Concordant translation of this text reads, "Endeavour to come to me quickly." The Syriac reads, "Exert thyself to come quickly". The Diaglott reads, "Do thy best to come to me soon".

All of this means constructive action, prompt action with the object of bringing praise to our God and a blessing to His people. The service of some is motivated by fear. With some it is superstition. The zeal of some is more or less ephemeral, while others are deceptive in presenting false teachings. The true servant of the Most High serves because of heart conviction and because of devout,

loving loyalty. He serves in the sincere hope he may be pleasing to his Lord irrespective of reward. That there is a reward is beyond question, but we do not love Him because of reward. We love Him because He first loved us. (1 Jno. 4. 19). We realise our Lord's work began first in ourselves, and He will finish that work.

Thus we follow our Lord's example in extending help to others. One of our most precious privileges in diligent helpfulness is that of extending a helping hand to those of like faith in their efforts to be diligent in service. Faith, fortitude, and knowledge prepare God's people to have patience with every effort put forth by others, irrespective of how weak they may be. Diligent, tactful patience is required in helping "Babes in Christ", in the task of encouraging the slow and the stupid, the excitable and the blundering, the over-confident and the sceptical.

This leads us to our own personal need. Let us be diligent in our devout service. Let us be diligent, constant, in controlling the use of our loving reverent service for our Father. Let us be diligent in bringing our all into cheerful, loving conformity to His will. No race, no battle will ever be won without diligent, enthusiastic effort. It costs something and the child of God must pay the price. If there is no cross there will be no crown. Piety and goodness spring from appreciative, grateful hearts who spontaneously delight in God's precepts and promises. In communion with God we offer our praise for every opportunity to serve Him, to help our brethren, to let the light of our spiritual understanding shine forth in a world of perplexity and doubt.

At best we are but dust. We do not dare trust our own righteousness. By faith we fold about us the ample robe of Christ's righteousness and, with constant diligence, work out our own salvation knowing that holiness in service without which no man shall see the Lord. (Heb. 12. 14). Let us be diligent!

The Christian life is a life of self-sacrifice, of self-immolation, of self-consumption, if it is to be pleasing to God. This is what we have covenanted to do—this is our compact with God. The lure of the easy chair, of sloth and lethargy is fatal to the spirit of sacrifice. It requires a white-hot glow in the heart to keep the sacrifice steadily consuming from day to day.



Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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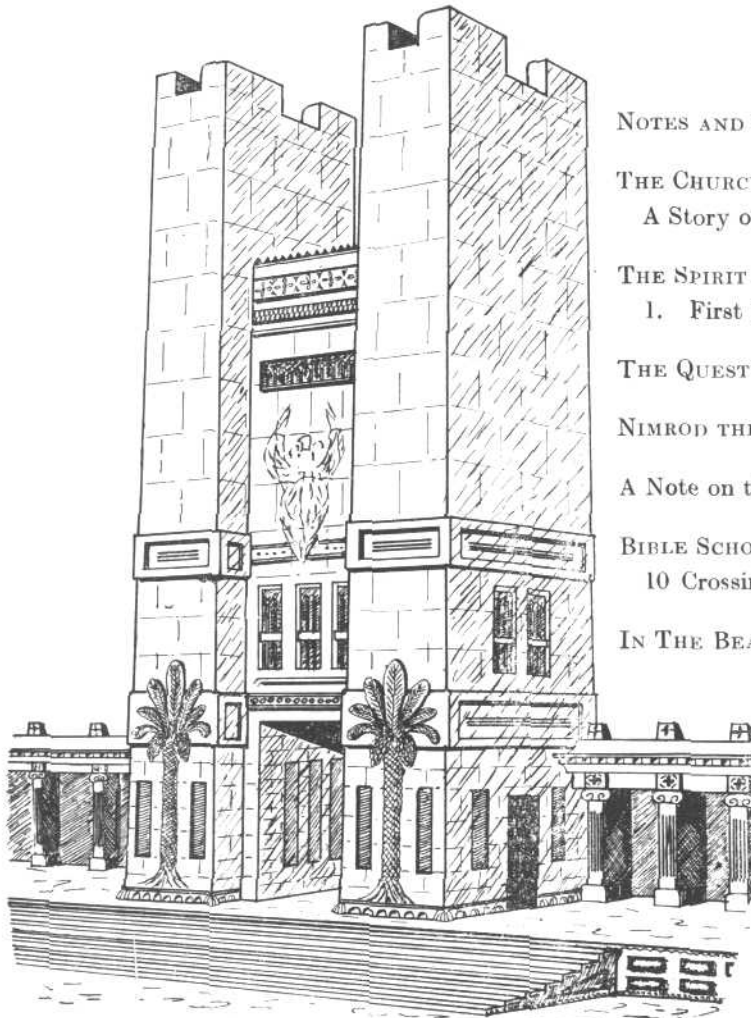
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

### Notes and Notices

The instalment of the Bible School on Exodus appearing in this issue deals with the crossing of the Red Sea and its associated wonder, the pillar of fire and cloud. Only a general outline of the probable physical facts behind each of these noteworthy happenings is given in the Bible School notes, sufficient to afford a tolerably clear picture of the general story of Israel's experiences, without quoting or enlarging upon the sources of information or the evidence for the conclusions advanced. In both cases the necessary enlargement would of necessity take up so much space as to unbalance the series and cause the thread of the narrative to be lost. In further explanation of what is stated in this instalment, however, it is intended at a date not too far distant to feature in a future issue a detailed exposition of the pillar of fire and cloud and a detailed and documented account of the latest findings regarding the nature and site of the Red Sea crossing, with illustrative map, as isolated articles separate from the Bible School series.

A number of readers may notice during the next few months that their annual renewal notice appears in their copies three months earlier than usual. This is in consequence of some re-arrangement in recording routine which has become necessary to enable us to keep pace with the work involved and it is trusted that the friends will respond by returning their renewal slips as promptly as possible. After the initial adjustment the slips will still be sent annually on the anniversary of the new date thus established.

May we stress the importance of these renewal slips. The circulation of the "Monthly" continues to increase and with the number now going out it is essential that we keep the despatching work involved within the capacity of the voluntary help available. To this end, and in order to avoid waste of unwanted copies, the systematic use of renewal slips is essential to ensure on the one hand that no one who really

appreciates the "Monthly" is deleted from the list and on the other hand that no one who is no longer interested is retained on the list. Your co-operation will be sincerely appreciated.

\* \* \*

We would acknowledge the receipt of an anonymous gift of £1 from "WE 17" and here express our sincere appreciation.

#### Gone from us

Sis. L. Appleyard (Doncaster)  
 Bro. J. Ensoll (London)  
 Dr. H. Hudson (Manchester)  
 Bro. E. J. Lardent (Welling)  
 Bro. F. Linter (Stockport)

*"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away"*

A Christian Church ought to be an exhibition of heaven upon earth—a manifestation of Christ below—a witness for God in the midst of the world, so that the world looking at the Church may be able to say: "This is a specimen of what that which is called the Gospel can do; this is a model of what the Christian teaching can achieve." And so all with whom we come into contact in our intercourse in life will say: "That man does not say much about his Christian beliefs when transacting his business, but there prevails in all that he does an integrity, a singleness of eye, a simplicity of purpose, a faithfulness to his engagements, and a superiority to trial, that proves he must have some fountain of peace and comfort and joy that we have not; we will go and hear what he hears, learn the lessons he has learned, and taste, if it be possible, the happiness which we see in his character." Such a one becomes to mankind either the salt that silently keeps a society from corruption, or the light shining on the hilltop that illuminates the earth with a ray of the glory of heaven.

(Forest Gate Bible Monthly.)

## THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

No. 11 in a series of  
stories of St. Paul

Corinth was the most depraved and iniquitous city in Greece. The capital city of Achaia, the Roman province which embraced the southern half of Greece as Macedonia did the north, an important seaport and commercial centre, it contained within its bounds all those vices and abuses which a place of resort for seamen of all nations, a military base, and a centre of paganism, could be expected to contribute. Corinth of St. Paul's day was a relatively new city; the ancient Corinth of Greek classical history had been destroyed and its inhabitants put to the sword by the Romans in 146 B.C. Julius Caesar, only some ninety years before the Apostle's visit, had the city rebuilt and peopled by retired Roman soldiers. From this new beginning it prospered commercially and attracted trade from all nations. The Isthmian games, held in Corinth every fourth year, brought visitors from every part of Greece; the court of the Roman Governor of Achaia, established in the city, ensured the concentration here of all official business with all the coming and going which that entailed. As if the graft, bribery and corruption associated with all these institutions was not enough, the worst excesses of paganism were practised in the great Temple of Aphrodite, notorious throughout Greece, where three thousand priestesses pandered to all that was lowest in human nature. The depravity and immorality of Corinth had become the subject of a popular proverb and the name "Corinthian" was a synonym for drunkards and thieves and extortioners and worse. What the Cities of the Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, were in the Old Testament, Corinth was in the New. Compared with Philippi and Thessalonica and Berea, where after intense efforts only a handful had believed to form small Christian communities, and the immensely more moral and respectable Athens, where after a courteous and careful hearing only one or two had accepted the faith, Corinth must have appeared the most unlikely city to yield fruit to the Apostle's labours. The riot of debauchery and violence and lust and degradation which was Corinth would seem to offer no soil at all in which the seed of the Gospel could find lodgement and spring up and bring forth fruit.

Yet it was to Corinth that the Lord Christ, appearing in vision to Paul, referred when He bade him remain and continue his work in confidence "*for I have much people in this city.*" To the human observer the evidence was all to the contrary; no reasonable man would expect

anything in the nature of a religious revival here. But the Divine viewpoint is different. "Man seeth not as God seeth, for man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart." God looked upon the mass of corruption that was Corinth and knew that out of that unpromising material He could fashion vessels fitted to honour, men and women drawn from the morass of iniquity and depravity to become upright, clear thinking servants of righteousness, worthy citizens of the world that is to be. "Miracles of grace" someone has called them. Perhaps only St. Paul, working in the midst of that darkness and hopelessness, could rightly assess the wonder of that miracle.

It was after the disappointment of Athens that Paul, not waiting any longer for his fellow-labourers still on their journey from the north, made his way, alone, to Corinth. He probably went by sea. The distance by road between Athens and Corinth is only about forty miles, but sea travel, in those days as now, was cheaper, and the Apostle's finances were low. Four or five hours straight sailing in a merchant vessel on which he probably gained a free passage in return for assistance to the mariners *en route* would bring him to Cenchrea—later to yield converts to his preaching—the port of Corinth. A steady walk of eight miles would then bring him to the city itself. At first he encountered the outskirts, areas of wood huts the homes of the poorer elements among the population. Then he came to the city proper, an imposing assemblage of noble buildings in stone and marble, adorned with statues and monuments and gleaming with gold and silver and polished bronze. He traversed its busy streets, thronged with merchants and soldiers, tourists and seamen, people of all nations; stood and gazed upon its shops and trading establishments, its gambling dens and haunts of vice, the magnificent palace of the Roman governor, the Pro-Consul, and the brooding malignity of the great Temple of whose sinister reputation Paul cannot but have heard. Stout-hearted evangelist though he was, surely he must have wondered what possible opening there could be here for him, what possible work his Lord could have for him in this place.

Following his usual practice, Paul started by seeking out the local synagogue. Here at least he could be sure of finding men and women of his own race and his own religion. And here he met with an unexpected encouragement and

commenced a personal friendship which was to have far-reaching consequences in later years. For the first time in his travels he met a couple who were already adherents of the Christian faith. Aquila was an Asiatic Jew, recently resident in Rome, married to a Roman wife, Priscilla. They had been affected by the decree of Claudius Caesar banishing all Jews from Rome. According to the Roman historian Suetonius this decree was issued in consequence of continued tumults and riots among the Jews in Rome instigated by one Chrestus. There is much debate among scholars as to whether this was the name of an otherwise unknown individual or, corrupted from Christus, is a reference to Jewish opposition to the introduction of Christianity in Rome, but no one really knows. But these circumstances, coupled with the fact that nothing is said about their conversion or baptism and the evident close association with them into which Paul entered at once makes it a reasonable conclusion that they were Christians already. It is fairly certain that the Christian faith arrived in Rome—by what means or by whom is entirely unknown—within a few years of the crucifixion and by now there was a substantial Christian community in the capital of the Empire. From these two, therefore, Paul must have had his first information about the city to which his thoughts so often turned and where at last he was to suffer martyrdom.

Aquila and Priscilla were "tentmakers"—weavers of goats' hair into sailcloth and tent cloth, a trade for the products of which there was always a good demand in the seaport towns of the Empire. This was Paul's own trade also—every Pharisee had to learn some manual craft even although his chosen vocation as Rabbi or Doctor of the Law would normally mean that he would not have to work at it, and Paul as an erstwhile Pharisee had conformed to the rule by learning this particular trade. At times such as this, when he must needs do something for his own support, this was the occupation he took up. It was logical therefore that he should join forces with his new-found friends and find accommodation in their home, labouring during the week, and on the Sabbath preaching Christ in the synagogue.

It was thus that Silas and Timothy caught up with him at last, having chased him almost the entire length, north to south, of Greece. Luke remained at Philippi still. Dissolute Corinth as yet had heard nothing of the message; probably no one outside the Jewish community so much as knew of Paul's existence. All his efforts at the moment were directed to the conversion of his

fellow Jews. Comparison of Acts 18:4 with verses 5-6 appears to infer that at the first his message was received, if not with enthusiastic support, at least with a measure of acceptance, sufficient to give hope of good results. The advent of Silas and Timothy, however, together with an evident intensification of the practical implications of Christianity, evoked strong opposition even to the extent of blasphemy. Perhaps some of the permanent officials of the synagogue felt that this apparent continuing influx of Christian missionaries was carrying things too far and threatened to disturb the security of their own position. Paul realised that he was going to get no farther with these stubborn co-religionists of his; he had seen the same thing so many times before. "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean" he exclaimed. "From henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles".

Justus, a Greek who professed Judaism and was a member of the synagogue, and who had now accepted the Apostle's message and become a Christian, offered the hospitality of his house, which was conveniently next door to the synagogue. Here the Apostle continued his preaching and here the Corinthian Church was born. One notable convert was Crispus, the presiding minister of the synagogue, who "believed on the Lord with all his house". The duties of his office had included selecting readers and teachers for the synagogue services and examining discourses and pronouncements for their orthodoxy and faithfulness to Scripture tradition. The secession of Crispus must have given the rest of the synagogue officials quite a jolt. "And many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptised". These were the Greek citizens now finding acceptance into the growing church. One wonders why St. Luke uses the particular term "Corinthians" instead of the general one "Greeks" as he does elsewhere in the narrative where other cities are concerned. Is it possible that he used the word in the light of its general meaning throughout Greece as a term of opprobrium, denoting the lowest and most degraded of men? Did he mean to indicate that many of the converts Paul gained at this time were in fact from the dregs of society, the most depraved and degraded of men and women, gathered from lives of every type of crime and immorality known in Corinth? It is possible! The writings of Paul to this very Corinthian church in later years shew that the believers there had in fact been guilty of all these things and found it hard in some cases to resist relapses into their bad old ways. The terrible indictment of paganism which forms the early part of Paul's Epistle to the Romans was written

when he was at Corinth on a later occasion, and what he knew of the city and its people and its practices must have formed the inspiration for that indictment. It is probably true to say that the motley crowd assembled in the house of Justus must have appeared to the Apostle about the most unpromising — and perhaps unlovely — collection of would-be Christians upon which he had ever set eyes. It might have been with very good reason that the Lord spoke to him at the time and told him that He "*had much people in this city*".

Despite this apparently unpropitious start, the work of the Apostle Paul at Corinth was the most gloriously successful of his entire missionary journey. Neither in Asia nor in Greece did he achieve such results at any other place. By the time he left Corinth eighteen months later there was a large and flourishing community which, for all its faults — and they were many and have become proverbial in later Christian thought and homily — was for ever after very dear to Paul's own heart. The two Epistles to the Corinthians reflect so much of the frailties and weaknesses of human nature that the figures which move through their pages are real and personal to all of us; they are so like real men and women — even Christian men and women, beset by shortcomings and mistakes like all people — that we cannot but feel quick sympathy with them. Time and time again they fell into grievous error; time and time again their father in God admonished them, sternly and judicially, yet with love and tenderness. In so many ways the church at Corinth prefigured in miniature just what the church of Christ in the world was to be like in later days.

In the meantime the members of the synagogue next door were not idle. They were biding their time. That time came when the Roman Pro-Consul ("deputy" in Acts 18:12) retired and was replaced by a successor. Now is the time, the synagogue Jews must have thought, while the new man is feeling his way and will not want to risk upsetting established officials or institutions, for an attempt to get rid of Paul and his evangelising. So they laid their plans and somehow had Paul arrested and arraigned before the new governor. "*When Gallio was deputy*" (became pro-consul) "*of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, saying 'this fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law'*".

Lucius Junius Annaeus Gallio was a refined, cultured, genial member of a distinguished Roman family, popular among his contemporaries at Rome and celebrated for his kindly disposition.

His brother, the philosopher Seneca, wrote of him "No mortal man is so sweet to any person as he is to all mankind." He represented the best type of Roman administrator, just and impartial in upholding the law and not influenced by either the praise or the threats of those with whom he had to do. He certainly gave the complainants in this case short shrift. Without waiting to hear Paul's defence he brusquely quashed the proceedings. Had it been an accusation of crime against property or person, of flagrant immorality or an offence against the laws of the State "*reason would that I should bear with you*" he said. It does not seem that Gallio rated the sincerity of these Jews very highly. He was perhaps better briefed than they had imagined. "*But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law*" (the law of Moses) "*look ye to it, for I will be no judge of such matters.*" It is clear that Gallio saw through their subterfuge at once, and made it crystal clear at the outset that they were not going to use Roman jurisprudence to serve their own sectarian ends; not while he was Pro-Consul, anyway. "*And he drave them from the judgment seat.*" The word indicates a forcible expulsion; it is evident that at his signal the Roman lictors (guards) hurried their exit by the indiscriminate use of their staves, and the discomfited schemers found themselves in the street with nothing achieved, and a few painful bruises to boot.

Popular feeling in Corinth was evidently with Paul, for by way of sequel to these ineffective court proceedings a number of Greek citizens laid hold on Sosthenes, who had evidently succeeded Crispus as ruler of the synagogue, carried him to a position in the street immediately in front of the court where Paul had been arraigned, and administered a sound beating in full view of the representatives of law and order. The proceeding was undoubtedly altogether illegal, and carried out at that place constituted somewhat of a slight upon the dignity of Roman rule, but "*Gallio cared for none of those things.*" Despite his customary good nature and courtliness, it is apparent that on this occasion he was thoroughly disgusted with the machinations of Paul's enemies and decided that one salutary lesson at the outset might save him a lot of trouble in the future. It would only need a hint to the centurion to ensure that the lictors on guard would watch the administering of the beating impassively and abstain from interference; without much doubt Sosthenes and his supporters would "get the message" as it is said today, and be more careful in future. Certain it is that the Christian community in Corinth had no further

trouble with their Jewish antagonists. Paul remained at Corinth for eighteen months, probably evangelising much of the district round about in addition to his work in the city. Before he left, a companion church existed at Cenchrea, eight miles away. The magnitude of the work achieved, compared with that at other centres, is indicated by the fact that the New Testament records the names of some seventeen notable converts originating from Corinth. At least five of them — Aquila, Priscilla, Erastus who held the important official office of City Treasurer, Gaius, and Phoebe the deaconess of Cenchrea — in after days travelled the world serving the interests of the developing faith. Paul sailed away at last, accompanied by his co-labourers Silas and Timothy, and his more recently acquired friends Aquila and Priscilla, doubtless feeling that this experience was the highlight of his journey. The most unpromising soil had yielded the richest harvest.

From Cenchrea the little party sailed to Ephesus on the Asiatic mainland, where Paul was well received and made a promise that he would return. It is evident that he felt the urge now to get back to his home church at Antioch; he had been away long enough. Leaving Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus, probably to foster the development of the work Paul had accomplished, the original trio took ship to Caesarea, the port for Jerusalem. They did not stay long, apparently long enough only to make some contact with the Jerusalem Christians, and then they were on the road again for Antioch.

So ended the second missionary journey. Paul and Silas had been away from home for some two

years of which eighteen months had been spent at Corinth. It had been an eventful two years. They had met and enrolled St. Luke at Troas and left him to work at Philippi. They had taken the youthful Timothy from Lystra and brought him to Antioch; found Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth and left them to serve at Ephesus. Half a dozen other converts, made during this journey, were later to join the Apostle in his further works; Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Sopater of Berea, Phoebe of Cenchrea, Erastus and Tertius of Corinth, all figure later on in the history. The two Epistles to the Thessalonians were written during this sojourn in Corinth; they were the first of the present books of the New Testament to be written. The stalwart form of the Apostle was probably a little bent; he must have shewn some outward evidence of the appalling physical sufferings he had endured during that two years but his spirit was as unconquerable as ever. He was still and for all time God's man, commissioned to plant the Gospel in regions where it had never yet been preached and to lay the foundations of the worldwide Christian church. Both he and Silas were bound to be glad of a rest and respite under the ministrations of their own brethren at Antioch, rehearsing in the assembly the triumphs and achievements of this notable mission which had its real beginning when Paul in his dream at night saw that Greek stranger reaching out appealing hands across the sea and heard his urgent plea "*come over into Macedonia and help us.*"

(To be continued)

### The Pharisees

The Pharisees had their rise in the days of Ezra, about five hundred years before Christ, and were at first a body of high-principled men devoted to preserving the purity of Israel's worship and the knowledge of the Law. The name itself means "the separated ones". It was in the time of the persecutor Antiochus Epiphanes, who endeavoured about 168 B.C. to make Israel pagan, that the movement had its greatest impetus and all who had reverence for the God of Israel either joined it or at least supported its aims. During the time of Israel's temporary freedom from foreign oppression about 130 B.C. the Pharisees resolutely opposed the national tendency to join up with foreign nations on the ground of the corrupting influence such alliances would involve. In this manner the Pharisees, by the time of the Roman annex-

ation, about 60 years before Christ, had become the dominant party in the country's political life, essentially the party of the common people, who looked to them for guidance. The Pharisees believed intensely in the coming of a Messiah who would deliver them from the pagan yoke, hence their early interest in the mission of Jesus and their later rejection of Him when it became apparent that He was not going to lead an armed insurrection against Rome. By His time the movement had become formal and corrupt and many Pharisees were hypocrites. A few retained the high principles of the early founders of the sect—Nicodemus, Gamaliel and Saul of Tarsus were all Pharisees and it is recorded that many Pharisees did believe in Jesus even although in John 7. 48 there were some who doubted the fact.

## THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

### 1. First Principles

A series of notes on the principles underlying prophetic interpretation,

It is a principle of Scripture that "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1. 21). Although the prophecies of the Bible have been openly derided by sceptics and too often quietly passed over by professing Christians, this truth remains, and unless these passages are accepted as definite predictions of future events a great deal of the Bible is meaningless and much that would be encouraging and instructive in the study of the Divine Plan is worse than useless. It is sometimes suggested that there is no need to do other than accept the prophecies and to believe them, leaving out of consideration the question as to *how* such predictions can be made and recorded in advance of the events to which they refer. The prophecies should be received, it is said, in faith, and God is pleased with such faith. This is true as far as it goes, but it is also true that those who would be "watchers on the walls of Zion" know how the Scripture bids them be ready always to give "a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3. 15). When all that can be said and written on the subject of prophecy has been said and written, there is and will always remain much scope for the exercise of faith, for its laws and its principles touch things which are certainly far too deep for the human mind to comprehend. At the same time it is as well to gain such a hold of what the Scriptures do reveal, and what everyday human experience has to show, as to the true nature of this marvellous power of foreseeing future events, that it is possible to answer with assurance the gibes of those who may and do say "Prophecy? Who ever heard of such a thing?"

Divine foreknowledge, predestination and election, and the relationship of these to the free will of the individual, are among the deepest of Scriptural themes, and this is generally recognised by students of the Word. An understanding of the principles of prophecy is valuable in the study of these doctrines and indeed the two subjects are closely connected.

It is impossible to read the Bible without observing the prominent place that is occupied by prophecy (using the term, not in its general sense of teaching, but in its specialised sense of foretelling). The earliest prophet, according to the apocryphal books, was Enoch, for he is said to have foretold the Deluge and the doom of the

fallen angels. Although the book which bears his name is not in the Bible, and is not classed as canonical, Jude, in his epistle, quotes from it and it is a prophecy that he quotes: "*Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all . . .*" (Jude 14; 1 Enoch 1. 9). It is an interesting fact that what is probably the earliest prophecy in human history to be recorded is one relating to the coming of Messiah, the representative of God, in the glory of His Kingdom, manifest to all men.

The first strictly Biblical prophecy is the vision of Abraham at the making of the covenant (Gen. 15). Abrahah had laid out the covenant sacrifice and was keeping vigil beside it when he beheld a flaming light hovering over the offering, and, entering into a trance-like condition ("an horror of great darkness") he received the supernatural message which told him of the coming Egyptian bondage of his seed and their eventual restoration to their own land "in the fourth generation." That is the earliest Biblical example of what may be called the "prophetic consciousness" and it is the nature of that prophetic consciousness and the varieties of its operation which it is proposed to examine.

Dreams; visions; direct revelation; inspired utterances; all these manifestations of the spirit of prophecy crowd the sacred pages from the history of Abraham onward, and the chain ends only with the last survivor of the twelve apostles, and the last book of the Bible, the majestic allegory called the Book of Revelation, the most sublime prophecy of all.

"All Scripture," said St. Paul, "is given by *inbreathing of God*" (2 Tim. 3. 16) and it is thus that His knowledge of things yet to come is communicated to those whose hearts and minds are right before Him. That "inbreathing" is the Holy Spirit, dispensing to every man "*severally as he will*" (1 Cor. 12. 11) but only to any man in proportion as he is consecrated to the service of God. David was one such man, and David said of himself "*The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue*" (2 Sam. 23. 2). It is to such that God is able to speak of His plans. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." (Amos 3. 7).

Jesus Himself stresses the need of attention to these things. "*Search the Scriptures*", He said

to the Pharisees, "*for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me*" (John 5: 39). He interpreted the Old Testament prophecies to the disciples. "*Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*" "Blessed . . . they who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" says John the Revelator (Rev. 1: 3). It should be clear, then, that the study of prophecy should by no means be ignored, but find its place in every Christian life.

The prophecies of the Bible seem to divide themselves naturally into four main classes. The first class is that to which can be given the name PREDICTION, that is, the plain and straightforward foretelling of events yet future. An example of this is the utterance of Zacharias, recorded in Luke 1: 76-79, in which he foretold the future career of his son, the boy who became known in after years as John the Baptist. At much about the same time the aged Simeon, taking the child Jesus into his arms, predicted that child's future (Luke 2: 26-32). A generation later Agabus, a Christian convert, foretold the coming arrest and imprisonment of Paul (Acts 21: 10-11). And, to go to the other end of the Bible, Balaam, fourteen centuries before Christ, beheld the hosts of Israel pouring into the land and predicted Israel's final triumph at the end of this present Age (Num. 24: 15-20).

It is to be noted that those who utter such predictions are themselves already men of God, devoted to His service, with minds continually dwelling upon the things of God. They are "consecrated" men. Hence their minds are already, as it were, "tuned in" to the spiritual world and to some extent at least they have regained that ability of direct communion with God which man in his primeval perfection possessed but which was lost at the Fall, when man came under the dominion of sin. Through such channels the Holy Spirit is able to work with greater freedom and hence it is that such men become the recipients of an understanding of the future that is denied to others. The New Testament shows that there were many in the Early Church who possessed this spirit of prophecy but from early Christian literature it would seem that it was rapidly lost after the generation which had known the Apostles passed away.

The second class of prophecy, the one that includes by far the greater part of the prophetic Scriptures, is that which may be called PRE-VISION, that is, *seeing* a representation of a future event before it has happened. Such a sight may be vouchsafed by means of a dream or a

vision. It may be a true-to-life view of the event to which it relates or it may be a symbolic representation which needs to be interpreted. The well-known dreams of Joseph and Pharaoh, and of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, are examples of symbolic pre-vision. A true-to-life drama, depicting things as they actually afterward occurred, might well be hinted at in that impassioned plea of Pilate's wife "*Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.*" (Matt. 27: 19). What strange foreglimpse of the future could it have been that moved the granddaughter of the Emperor Augustus Caesar so to entreat her husband? Whatever it was it seems to have filled her pagan heart with terror and to have shown her something of the consequences of Christ's crucifixion.

The true nature of the visions so often described in Scripture is not fully understood, but it is probable that the "appearance" was an impression made on the visual organs by the power of the Holy Spirit without there being any objective reality, any real shape or form before the observer, so that other men might be in the company of the recipient of the vision and yet see nothing themselves. Prophecies given by means of vision and in symbolic form include the visions seen by St. John and described in the Book of Revelation, and the great Temple with its River and Trees of Life seen by Ezekiel. An instance where the vision affords a true picture of future things is surely the one in which Paul was "*caught up into the third heaven, and heard unspeakable things, which it is not possible for a man to relate.*" (2 Cor. 12: 4 Diag.). In this case it seems that Paul received a clear sight of conditions in the third epoch of world history, the one which is to succeed this present Age, and in which evil will be destroyed and its effects undone: the time when Christ's Kingdom on earth and in heaven will be in full operation. Another example may be that view of the future which enabled Jesus to predict the precise manner of Peter's death (John 21: 18).

The third class of prophecy is that which is based, at least in part, upon the prophet's own observation of the world around him and his realisation, from his knowledge of the Divine principles and plans, of the inevitable outcome of the forces which he can see at work. This can be termed "PROPHETIC FORESIGHT." Such a man must needs be a keen observer of world events and maintain an intelligent contact with the affairs of his fellow men besides being a reverent and whole-hearted servant of God. He needs the guidance of the Spirit but he needs also

a knowledge of the ways of men. Isaiah and Jeremiah were men of this type, and many of Jeremiah's prophecies are clearly based upon his knowledge of the result that he saw must follow the course his countrymen were pursuing. When, in the 44th chapter of his book, he assured the Jews that by remaining in Judah they would live safely, but that if they fled into Egypt they would never return, but would die there at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, he was voicing a conviction that must first have come to him in consequence of his study of the political signs and portents, a conviction that was confirmed for him by the working of the Holy Spirit in his mind. Jesus, too, when giving His "end of the Age" prophecy, as recorded in the 21st chapter of Luke's gospel, viewed the world of his day and the temper of men, and spoke as He did speak, knowing that no other ending to a world built upon such principles was possible.

The fourth class of prophecy is best designated "REVELATION" for it deals with those communications which are made by God directly to His servants, and usually by means of a "revealing angel." Of this class is the noteworthy revelation of world history recorded in the 11th and 12th chapters of Daniel, a vivid narrative given to the prophet, and recorded by him, in the sixth century B.C., so strikingly true to subsequent history that scholars not prepared to admit its Divine origin have been hard put to it to offer a rational explanation of its existence.

We are still witnessing the progressive fulfillment of that amazing account. It is clear that such a revelation of future things, expressed in such definite terms, could have come only from God Himself, Who knows the end from the beginning, and it is in prophecies of this type therefore that the allied subject of Divine foreknowledge comes more prominently to the front.

Behind every manifestation of prophecy, then, there is the mind of God, Who, dwelling in eternity, outside the limits of time and space as those terms are understood by men, sends His thoughts into the time and space confines of our world and our lives, and by means of His Holy Spirit communicates those thoughts to men whose minds have been made receptive. From His standpoint in eternity God views the forward vista of human history and tells men of what is yet to be, "*declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my good pleasure'*" (Isa. 46, 10). Does God predestinate? The Scriptures declare that He does! Has man free will? The Scriptures maintain that he has! We should not rest content until

in the pursuit of our studies we begin to see how these things both can be. Paul declares in Romans 9 that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he might refuse to let Israel go; nay, more, that even for this very purpose He had raised him up, that His glory and power might be shown by means of him. And who can resist God's will, asks Paul (Rom. 9, 19). And yet . . . to what extent, if any, was the masterful, ruthless Amenhotep II, Pharaoh of all Egypt in the fifteenth century B.C., the victim of a compelling force not of himself, leading him on to oppress the Israelites in his land? To what extent can he be relieved of moral responsibility for what happened? These, and many similar questions, can be in fair way of answering when we have attained a clear view of the nature of Scriptural prophecy.

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*(This introductory article is intended to outline the subject. Succeeding ones will take up various aspects as a basis for the more detailed study of the prophecies concerning the "Last Days").*

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### The Great Way of Confucius

"When the Great Way prevails, the world is one Great Commonwealth. The virtuous and able are selected for office, good faith is cultivated, and harmony prevails. People regard not only their own parents as parents, and not only their own children as children. The old are able to enjoy their old age; the young are able to employ their talents; the adolescents are free to grow; helpless widows and widowers, lonely orphans, and the crippled and deformed are provided for. Men have occupations and women have homes. Wealth is not to be thrown away, nor is it to be kept as personal possession. Labour is not to be wasted, nor is it to be employed for private gain. Selfish schemes cease to exist, and banditry and rebellion do not rise. All doors are open. This is the age of the Great Commonwealth."

These are the words of Confucius (551-478 B.C.), the Chinese philosopher whose teachings are professed as a religion by one-fifth of earth's population. They reveal his appreciation of the principles of the Millennial Kingdom and although, living before Christ, he never knew of God's provision for man, he will one day see his ideals in practice, and probably quickly pledge himself to Christ's service and become again a teacher of men.

## ? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. *What is the "flaming fire" of 2 Thess. 1.7-8? Is it a symbol of purifying truth?*

A. The action of fire is used metaphorically in the Scriptures for two entirely different things. In the one case it is a cleansing and purifying agent, having the function of eliminating dross and defilement, leaving the subject pure and genuine. An instance of this is the prophetic vision of Malachi (3.2-3) where the prophet speaks of the day of Divine intervention in earth's affairs. "*Who may abide the day of his coming and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire . . . he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver . . . and he shall purify the sons of Levi . . . that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness*". On the other hand Malachi's 4th chapter, vs 1, speaks of fire as a destructive agent, consuming that which is fit only for destruction. "*The day cometh, that shall burn as an oven . . . all that do wickedly . . . the day that cometh shall burn them up that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.*" It is necessary therefore when considering any word of Scripture to decide in what sense the mention of fire is intended to be taken.

In 2 Thess. 1.7-8 the meaning is quite evidently that of judgment and destruction. Divine judgment is to be executed upon the obdurately wicked who both know not God and will not obey the gospel. The symbol is that of a violent storm in which the deadly lightning strikes down the enemies of God. There is no intimation of a purifying or cleansing influence here because the basis of the entire passage is that there is nothing left to purify or cleanse. The time of the event is defined in verse 10 as "*When he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe in that day*". The reference to "that day" places the whole matter in the time of the Messianic Kingdom when Christ rules as King. During that blessed time the evangelical witness will go out with such power, unhindered by the machinations of Satan, who will be "*bound a thousand years*" (Rev. 20.2) that all in whom resides the slightest capacity for repentance will heed the call of the Gospel and come to Christ and so to eternal life. If any should fail thus to enter into life — and if any such there be surely they must be few indeed — it can only be because they have wilfully set themselves against God in the face of full light and opportunity, and will not have Him. These are the ones referred

to in 2 Thess. 1.8-9. Since they will not have God, and life resides only in God and can come only from God, the only possible alternative is the absence of life. As the Psalmist puts it "*they shall be as though they had not been*" or as St. Paul has it here "*everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power*".

\* \* \*

Q. *How could Jesus Christ be "in heaven" whilst at the same time He was talking to Nicodemus on earth, as stated in John 3.13?*

A. The passage concerned reads "*No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven*". The final four words "*which is in heaven*" are of somewhat doubtful authority. Two of the most reliable sources, the Sinaitic and the Vatican Mss, omit them and many modern authorities uphold their omission. The N.E.B. puts it "*whose home is in heaven*" and since some ancient manuscripts present a modified phrase "*the Son of Man who is of heaven*" it may well be that the original form of the expression as actually spoken by Jesus was to the effect that the only one who had ever been in heaven was the Son of Man who belonged there by right but had left it temporarily to come to earth. It is of course also possible that the four words represent a "gloss", a comment by some late copyist, added to the text to ensure understanding on the part of readers that this same Jesus, then on earth, was now in heaven, i.e., that He had ascended and returned whence He came when His life on earth was over. Such glosses, added in the margin or between the lines of text, were often incorporated in the text itself by later copyists not discerning between true text and comment, and then become unidentifiable in our printed versions.

Why not take advantage of the quiet time of our daily opportunities that strength may be imparted to us by the only source profitable to man? Nature works in quietness; strength is begotten by admitted methods and formulated habits, thereby accepting God as the "Live Wire" to every fibre of our being. The Upper Room experience of added strength came conditionally, by process of waiting. We are all the time busy at our work; we do not know the sacredness of resting. We know how to toil and how to give, but we do not know how to sit still and how to receive.

## NIMROD THE MIGHTY HUNTER

*"And Cush begat Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord" (Gen. 10.8-10).*

Who was this Nimrod? Although he receives only this short notice in the Book of Genesis and brief references in Chronicles and Micah his name has been immortalised in Eastern legend and folklore perhaps more than that of any other man. He is as firmly rooted in Arab tradition as he is in that of the Hebrews; this points to a date for the origin of the story which is earlier than the time of Abraham when the two races diverged. There seems no reason to doubt that such an individual did actually live and become famous at some time during the period between the Flood and Abraham, a long span during which the petty kingdoms of the Euphrates and Tigris valleys had their rise.

Nimrod was a descendant of Ham, son of Noah, through Cush. Cush was the forefather of the people afterwards known as the Sumerians, founders of the earliest civilisation after the Flood. Abraham, although a Semite, descended from Shem, son of Noah, was born in Ur of the Chaldees, a Sumerian city; at this time many of Shem's descendants were living together with the Sumerians more or less as one people and Abraham's ancestors had been resident in Sumeria for many generations. The name of Nimrod occurs in Genesis 10, which is recognised to be a catalogue of early nations, in association with the beginning of the Sumerian city-states from which Abraham eventually emigrated to commence the long history of the children of Israel. This fact enables the date of Nimrod to be estimated fairly closely. Verse 10 of Gen. 10, critically translated, declares that *"his kingdom was the beginning of Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar"*, (not "the beginning of his kingdom" as in the A.V.). Shinar is the Hebrew form of Sumeria, and the four cities are known to modern excavators as Babylon, Uruk, Akkad and Nippur respectively. Modern discoveries have shown that the earliest of the four, Uruk, was founded about four centuries before the birth of Abraham so that Nimrod must be placed somewhere near 2600-2700 B.C., three or four centuries after the Flood. This is the period that is shown by archaeological evidences to be that during which the early Sumerians were building up the land and cities which afterwards became Babylonia and Assyria. To this extent the Genesis account is confirmed by historical evidence.

Nimrod is described in Gen. 10 as "a mighty hunter before the Lord." That there was something very special about this man and his prowess is evident from the intimation that his name had passed into a common proverb; *"as it is said, even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord"* wrote the chronicler. This means that Nimrod's name and deeds were remembered in after generations whenever great things were spoken of. It is a remarkable fact that throughout all the ages since that far-off time, and even at this present day, the name of Nimrod has been and is a proverb among the Arabs of the Middle East. Any great thing is still ascribed to this legendary hunter of more than four thousand years ago. The ruined temple of Nebo at Borsippa has been known for ages as the *Birs-Nimrud*, the tower of Nimrod, although it was actually built centuries after Nimrod was dead. The gigantic ruined dam, ten miles long, across the Tigris some sixty miles below Mosul, which in ancient times controlled the Babylonian irrigation system, was called Nimrod's Dam. All of this points to Nimrod having been a military leader, a conqueror who led his followers into battle for the aggrandisement of their own position and possessions. Early kings usually obtained their crowns by war — and usually lost them by the same means. The expression "a mighty hunter" could quite well mean this; there is no need to restrict the word to the hunting of wild animals. *"Tsayid"* — hunter — is referred to the hunting of men in Jer. 16.16 *"I will send hunters and they shall hunt them"* referring to the driving of the children of Israel back to their own land at the End Time, and Micah 7.2 *"Ye hunt every man his brother"*.

The Jewish historian Josephus, of the First Century, says that Nimrod was the leading spirit in the enterprise of the Tower of Babel, Josephus was not always very careful in the selection of his source material but this is what he says *"The plain in which they first dwelt was called Shinar. God also commanded them to send colonies abroad, for the thorough peopling of the earth, that they might not raise seditions among themselves, but might cultivate a great part of the earth, and enjoy its fruits after a plentiful manner; but they were so ill instructed, that they . . . imagining that the prosperity they enjoyed was not derived from the favour of God, but supposing that their own power was the proper cause of the plentiful condition they were in, did not obey him . . . Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt*

of God. He was . . . a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means that they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny — seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence upon his power. He also said that he would be revenged on God if he had a mind to destroy the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach, and that he would revenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers." (Antiquities 1.4.1-2).

Josephus' account need not be taken too seriously, but it is significant that the legends of Babylon and Sumeria claim that the great Tower of Babylon associated with the Temple of Marduk, which is the tower of the Bible story, was built by the spirits of the heaven and earth at the command of Marduk the chief god of the Sumerians, and the name Nimrod is a Hebrew derivation of Marduk. The credit for this latter conclusion goes to a famous Assyriologist of two generations ago, Prof. T. G. Pinches. He explains that the name Marduk when transliterated into Hebrew drops the suffix -uk and becomes Marad. But *marad* in Hebrew is also the verb "to rebel", and this, for the Old Testament writer with the characteristic Hebrew flair for play upon words which is frequent in the Bible gave opportunity to cast the name into the grammatical form of the verb, "*ni-marad*", meaning "he was rebellious". (In a similar way the name "Babel" was allied to the Hebrew word "*balbal*" meaning "confusion"; see Gen. 11.9).

If this identification be correct — and there seems no reason to doubt it — then Nimrod the man and Marduk the god are one and the same. The worship of Marduk had its origin in the exploits and rulership of Nimrod. Hence the mention of Nimrod and his works in Gen. 10 is not merely a casual allusion to a local hero without much significance or importance, but a record of the origin of the greatest system of idolatry and paganism known in the history of man. Marduk was the centre and object of the Sumerian system of mythology and worship; his cult was adopted in later times by the Babylonians and Assyrians, and from them gave birth to the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome. Nearly three thousand years saw the worship of Marduk and the system of gods and goddesses associated with him in the lands of the East, and much of the ceremonial and objects of ritual devised those many years ago was carried over first into Greece and pagan Rome, thence into Papal Rome and so into the service of organised Christian church worship, remaining

in a goodly number of instances to the present day. Such has been the effect of that vast system of idolatry and superstition which grew up on the banks of the Euphrates in those early days soon after the Flood.

According to Sumerian mythology Marduk was the son of Ea the sea-god, who with his brothers Enlil god of earth and sky and Anu god of heaven were born of Anshar and Kishar, the waters of heaven and waters of earth. This is sufficiently similar in symbol to the three sons of Noah which came out of the Deluge caused by the waters from above and below (the "windows of heaven" and "fountains of the great deep" of Gen. 7.11) to give some reason for the belief that all these Sumerian myths are derived in the first place from the history of early mankind as known to the first men after the Flood. The renowned and so-called "Babylonian Story of Creation" (technically called the "*Enuma Elish*" from its opening words "*When in the beginning*") has been constantly studied by many scholars in the unavailing attempt to relate it in some way to the creation story of Genesis; the present writer believes that the *Enuma Elish* is not a creation account of that nature at all, but rather a symbolic poem describing the origin of the Sumerian gods, land and people and recounting the achievements of their early history, the building of their first cities, the taming of the rivers and erection of their celebrated irrigation systems, and the building of their temples and the great Tower of Babylon. All of this is cast in the form of a mystic narrative in which the central figure is the man who directed these herculean tasks and is pictured deified as a god — in later legend the god Marduk. In the poem, Marduk is the hero who leads a bitter fight with Tiamat, dragon of the waters, and a host of monsters who devastate the land. Having won the victory he becomes pre-eminent among the gods and in the sight of men. All of this is a very picturesque description of the efforts of those early settlers to grapple with the flood waters of the Euphrates and Tigris and restrain them within an orderly system of canals and reservoirs, and the man who did this was rightly acclaimed a public benefactor and deliverer. Marduk or Nimrod, living a few centuries after the Flood, was that man, and in the glory of his achievement he attracted the attention of men away from God and toward himself. The Sumerians made him a god; the Hebrews branded him the rebellious one.

An unwitting confirmation of this conclusion comes from Gen. 10.25 recording the birth of Peleg descendant of Shem, who received that name, it is said "*Because in his days was the earth divided*". No explanation of this cryptic remark is offered

in the account. The word means the channelling of the ground to make a watercourse and could well refer to the construction of the extensive canal system already mentioned. Peleg and his family were resident in Sumeria at the time; he was in the fourth generation from the three sons of Noah which makes him more or less contemporary with Nimrod and certainly living at the time it is known the first canals were constructed. Taking these two isolated Scripture references together we have a fascinating glimpse of the very beginning of civilisation which is afforded in no other existing literature or records.

The praises sung in honour of Marduk following his victory are very reminiscent of what seem to have been the achievements of Nimrod. So far as Genesis is concerned he appears as a mighty warrior-king and founder of a kingdom which included Babel. According to Josephus he incited the people to defy God and to trust him instead. In this light the words of the *Enuma Elish* are interesting. The particular part of the account is immediately after the building of the Tower by the *Annunaki*, the spirits of heaven and earth, and occupies the latter part of the sixth and nearly all of the seventh tablet of the poem. A few pertinent extracts will serve to show how the encomiums showered upon Marduk correspond with, and illuminate, the brief details given in Genesis and by Josephus regarding Nimrod.

#### Tablet 6

- Line 107 "Let him exercise shepherdship over mankind"
- 108 "Throughout the days to come let them, without forgetting make mention of his deeds"
- 119 "Let mankind stand in awe before our god"
- 120 "As for us, by as many a name as we have called him, he shall be our god"
- 135 (He) "only is the refuge of the land, the protection of his people"
- 136 "Him the people shall praise"
- 137 "He stood up and seized the reins of the land"
- 140 "The commands of his mouth we have exalted above those of the gods his fathers"
- 141 "Verily he is the lord of all the gods of heaven and earth"
- 142 "The king at whose instructions the gods above and below shall be afraid"

#### Tablet 7

- Line 14 "No one among the gods can equal him"
- 18 "May he not be forgotten among men, but let them hold his deeds in remembrance"
- 21 "The creator of riches and plenty, the establisher of abundance"
- 22 "Who has turned our wants into plenty"

If these were the terms in which the people of the land praised their hero it is not surprising that a few centuries later Abraham, the "father of the faithful," found himself alone in the land in his possession of faith in the One God. Neither is it surprising to read the words of Joshua to the hosts of Israel at the beginning of their occupancy of the land of promise. "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood" (the river Euphrates) "in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods" (Josh. 24. 2). The immediate forebears of Abraham were idolators, worshippers of Nimrod. That true understanding of God which must have been possessed by the immediate descendants of Noah had by the time of Abraham been submerged in the new worship of this man who by his prowess and enterprise had won the allegiance of the masses. It was left to Abraham to spearhead that return to God which has been marked in subsequent ages, first by the development of Israel and its emergence during the five centuries before Christ as a truly monotheistic people in a polytheistic world and then by all that Christianity has meant to the world during the past two millenniums.

In the meantime, all that is left of the great Temple of Marduk in Babylon, and its mighty Tower, the Tower of Babel of the Bible, is a few lines of mouldering brickwork about four feet high rotting away in the middle of a marsh in an area desolate of man and inhabited only by wild creatures. The cities, the temples, the canals, which at one time made this land the zenith of world civilisation have all gone. The name of Nimrod is remembered but all his exploits are in the past. Nothing has remained. He was not a god after all; he was only a man. And he has been dead for more than four thousand years.

The achievements of Abraham live on. The faith he upheld still endures, and the day will yet come when men will say, in the prophetic words of Isaiah (25.9) "Lo, THIS is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. We will rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

## A NOTE ON THE SECOND ADVENT

Dr. Herbert Lockyer's book "*The Rapture of Saints*" contains (page 13) an interesting illustration of the two phases of the Second Advent, the *parousia* and the *epiphaneia* (the presence and the forthshining). "One writer has reminded us that we have a forceful analogy of these two parts of the one Advent in the return of Charles II after his exile. The two stages of his return were as follows; the first concerned his loyal supporters, who were called across to France to meet him. They spent some time there with him, discussing his plan of campaign, and receiving orders and appointments. Then came the second stage, when Charles came back with them, and was revealed to the nation as a returning King, accepted the homage of his subjects, and was enthroned; after which came the judgment and the trial of the leading rebels."

The coming of the Lord for His Church, which is an important factor in the *parousia*, will be unseen by the world at large says Dr. Lockyer. "Apart from his own, none will be aware of such a great event and Advent". He comes with the voice of

the Archangel, but "*the accents of his majestic voice will not be detected by a deaf world*" (pages 18 and 20). Many Christians are coming more and more to the conviction that the revelation of the Lord from heaven, which is to signal the commencement of His reign over the nations and the inauguration of the Millennium, will be preceded by an unseen phase of His Advent during which His own, the Christian Church of this Age, believers who have been "buried with him by baptism into his death," will be raised from the dead by resurrection, or if still living will be "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (I Cor. 15. 52), to be joined to Him in the celestial world. It is this to which I Thess. 4. 14-18 refers in vivid poetic language. The revelation of the Lord, with His Church, to all the world, and the assumption of kingly authority, the setting up of that Messianic kingdom which is to be "the desire of all nations" (Hag. 2. 7), comes later (Rev. 20, 4).

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## ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

Judea fell into the hands of the Arab Moslems in A.D. 634 but it was not until A.D. 638 that Jerusalem, at the time a Christian city, was captured. Caliph Omar (A.D. 634-644) comrade of Mahomet and the second Caliph to succeed him, visited Jerusalem to inspect his new conquest. Here is a comment by a recent author.

"When Jerusalem fell it too was visited by Umar (Omar). As the patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius, styled the "honey tongued defender of the Church", was showing the aged caliph round the holy places he was so impressed by the uncouth mien and shabby raiment of his Arabian visitor that he is said

to have turned to an attendant and remarked in Greek 'Truly this is the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet as standing in the holy place.' (History of the Arabs: Sitti: 1960).

(A point not always realised by students of prophecy is that Palestine was under Christian, not Jewish, control, at the time of the Arab conquest, and was ruled by the Emperor Heraclius of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire with capital at what is now Istanbul. Jewish control of the land ended in A.D. 135 in the days of the Emperor Hadrian and was not restored until 1948).

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According to the "Moody Monthly" experts say that no man has ever used more than one five hundredth part of his brain capacity. If that statement is correct, and bearing in mind that God certainly did not provide man with a brain that was not intended to be used, we can visualise what mighty increase in mental powers must be the order of the day in the next Age when

evil is restrained and men are encouraged to use all the powers which God has given them in the manner he intended. Doubtless sin and death are responsible for the limited use we now make of our brains; in that glad day when sin and death are things of the past men will indeed "enter into the inheritance prepared for them from the foundation of the world."

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**BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES**
**EXODUS**
**Part 10 Crossing of the Red Sea Chaps. 11. 17—14. 31**


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The direct distance between the land of Goshen in Egypt and the southern part of Canaan is about two hundred miles by the ancient highway known as the Way of the Philistines, so called because it traversed their territory. This was the road travelled by Jacob when he came into Egypt and logically it should have been the road by which the hosts of Israel under Moses would go when they returned. They could have reached their destination in about three weeks. But Moses did not take them that way. He led them southward, into the tangled mountain masses of Central Sinai, through waterless wastes and arid deserts, by a difficult and devious way which involved them in a journey of some eight or nine hundred miles. Not until forty years later did they eventually arrive at the borders of their objective. The question might well be asked why Moses, with all his intimate knowledge of the area, embarked upon so apparently an unnecessary route; why God, Who had declared His intention of establishing the people in their new land, permitted it.

Exod. 13.17 gives the first clue. "*God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that way was near, for God said, Lest peradventure the people should repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea*". It may not be immediately apparent why the prospect of a fight with the Philistines should appear as an objection when the tenacity and ferocity with which the Israelites under Joshua did fight the Canaanites upon their ultimate entry is remembered. The answer, of course, lies in the fact that the generation which went in under Joshua was not the one which left Egypt. Joshua's men were born in the wilderness, hardy sons of the desert, equal to the task before them. Almost every page of Exodus describing the first twelve months after leaving Egypt shows that generation of Israel to be a timorous, querulous, easily discouraged people quite unequal to the task of wresting the land of Canaan from the powerful tribes who held it. They had for generations been a subject slave nation and they were quite unready for the responsibilities and obligations of freedom. At the first sight of the mail-clad warlike Philistines they would probably run for their lives back to Egypt.

Moses had for forty years cherished the dream of delivering and leading his people back to the Promised Land; did he realise at this moment, when the great thing for which he had planned and laboured for forty years was an accomplished fact, that the fruitage of his efforts must wait until another generation, a generation as yet unborn, had grown to manhood. For a man already eighty years of age it must have been a bitter pill to swallow but there is no hint of murmuring or impatience with the Divine decree. If God said that was to be the way, then that way it would be.

So the children of Israel went up "harnessed" out of the land of Egypt. The margin has "by five in a rank" but the true meaning of the word is in an organised manner, in orderly array. This was no undisciplined rabble crowding onward with little idea of direction or objective. Moses had between two and three million men, women and children, with all their flocks and herds and domestic impedimenta under his control and the manner in which he discharged that tremendous responsibility and ruled that people for forty years in a gigantic nomadic enterprise which brought them at last to the end of an eight hundred miles journey is one of the world's great epics.

The mummified body of Joseph went with them. The Book of Genesis closes at that patriarch's deathbed and the promise by his kindred that when the Divine promise of deliverance, in a then far future day, should be fulfilled they would take his body back to the land of Israel with them and let it rest there. Ch. 13.19 records the carrying out of that undertaking. Joseph was still remembered as the man who saved the house of Israel when otherwise it could not have survived. So far as is known or can be deduced from the records, Joseph was the only one of Jacob's twelve sons who was eventually laid to rest in the homeland. The remaining eleven sons lie in Egypt to this day.

Now the journey begins in earnest. "*And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, on the edge of the wilderness*" (ch. 13.20) This was a distance of about twelve miles, and was probably considered a fair day's journey for a multitude of the nature concerned. Etham, near modern Ismailia, was on the Egyptian fron-

tier; beyond it lay the wilderness, traversed by the Way of the Philistines, a track used by merchant caravans, marching armies, and all whose business took them between Egypt and Canaan. Etnam was a military garrison town where the entrance into Egypt from the east was guarded, and in the ordinary way Israel would pass through or by it and then be out of Egypt and on the way to Canaan. For the moment, however, they were encamped for the night in the open fields outside the town.

It is now that the first apparently supernatural element in the story of the wanderings appears. According to ch. 13, 21-22 the Lord went before them in the visible form of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. When the pillar rested, the people remained immobile. When it lifted and moved forward, they struck camp and followed. The popular conception of this factor in the story is that this apparition was necessary to ensure their safe arrival; without it they would not know which way to go. When one realises that the whole area of the Sinai Peninsula between the three seas is only the size of England between Manchester and the South Coast, that the territory was thoroughly well known and being constantly traversed by all sorts of people, and that Moses at least had lived forty years in its midst and must have known it intimately, it ought to be clear that there was no necessity for such a function of the "guiding cloud." It appears to be nearer the truth to say that the cloud and fire were symbols of the Divine presence with the host, a visible assurance that God was with them and would be their spiritual guide all the way. Later incidents in the story show that the pillar of fire was not only a means of guidance and protection for Israel; it was also an agent of judgment when some great apostasy had taken place, as did occur several times during the march through the wilderness. There are some twenty or so references to the pillar and cloud of fire scattered through the narrative in Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The cloud is variously described as a cloud, as smoke or thick darkness. The fire is referred to as fire, light, the glory, lightning or devouring fire. At the time of the Red Sea crossing it gave light to Israel as they crossed the sea but was darkness to the pursuing Egyptians. At the rebellion over the manna the fire appeared in the cloud. The voice of God was heard out of the midst of the fire. Perhaps the most impressive manifestation is that of Moses on Mount Sinai when the cloud covered the mountain and the sight of God was like devouring fire in the cloud.

This pillar of cloud and fire was obviously

something real. Moses did not imagine this part of his narrative; neither was it a later embellishment to the story. Israel, passing through the mountains of Sinai in their journey, did so to the accompaniment of an outwardly visible phenomenon which both assured them that God was with them and to a great extent struck terror into the hearts of their enemies.

The requirements of all the occasions where the phenomenon is mentioned are well met by concluding that what is described as cloud and fire was an aerial electrical disturbance, probably an almost continuous occurrence of stormclouds and lightning on a truly tropical scale. Such storms in the tropics are, at times, of an intensity which turns night virtually into day; the flashes of lightning follow in such rapid succession that the light is almost continuous. Throughout the Bible the storm and the lightning are used as symbols of the presence of God. Centuries later the prophet Habakkuk, speaking of this very event, said of God coming down to deliver His people, that His glory covered the heavens, his brightness was as the lightning, and the lightning was as the shining of His glittering spear. (Hab. 2). The occasions when it is recorded that this protecting fire, the glory of the Lord, "came out" and destroyed the apostates, as at Taberah, at the time of the twelve spies' return, and at the rebellion of Korah, (Num. 11, 14 and 16), are all consistent with the effect of lightning. And the cloud which brought darkness upon the land and made it impossible for the Egyptians to see the Israelites is quite consistent with the known effect of low-lying heavy thunderclouds, sometimes making day almost as dark as night.

It was when Israel began to get ready for the next stage of the journey that they got the big shock. They were not to continue eastwards, across the frontier and heading directly for Canaan. They were to turn abruptly to the right and proceed southwards, along the west shore of the Red Sea and therefore still in Egypt, and make their next camp at a place called Pihahiroth. Now this must have seemed suicidal. The only piece of land connecting Egypt with the east, in that day, was at Etham. South of that point the Red Sea formed a barrier. If Israel went the way the Lord instructed they could not escape from Egypt without finding some means of transporting three million people and an uncounted quantity of sheep and cattle across a minimum of six miles of seawater.

The locality of the Red Sea crossing has been debated for the past two thousand years and particularly the last two centuries. Every possible point along the ninety miles connecting Suez

with the Mediterranean Sea has had its advocates and plenty of books have been written on the subject. Ignorance of the geographical conditions of Egypt at the time of the Exodus accounts for much of the confusion but in more recent years accurate geological surveys and the general accumulation of knowledge have made it possible to reconstruct the nature of the land over which the Israelites were passing and this in turn has made the Exodus account much more intelligible.

Having turned southward at Etham, the people were trapped between the sea on their left hand and the mountains on their right and in front. Because of this Pharaoh said exultantly (ch. 14:3) "*They are entangled in the land; the wilderness hath shut them in.*" (The latter phrase really means "the wilderness is closed to them," i.e., they have missed their chance of getting into the wilderness which was outside Egypt and on the other side of the Red Sea). So he decided to go after them and recapture them. Between Ismailia and Suez today there are the Bitter Lakes but apart from these there are two stretches of land across which Israel could have escaped. But in Moses' day both those pieces of land were below the sea. The Red Sea was continuous all the way to Etham. Since then the land southward has been slowly rising; from Etham northward to the Mediterranean it has been slowly sinking. A branch of the Nile which ran into the Red Sea at Etham in the days of Abraham has been steadily running dry through the ages because of this rising land and Egyptian history is full of records of various Pharaohs who had the river bed excavated to allow the water still to run. At the Israelite camp at Pi-hahiroth land which today is thirty feet above sea level was in the time of Moses thirty-five to forty feet lower, so that the people looked out across a sea some six miles wide but only about five or six feet deep.

A trek of twenty-five miles brought them to the appointed place. Neither Pi-hahiroth nor Baal-zephon on the opposite coast have been identified; both names have been lost in the mists of antiquity, but the narrative is so detailed that with a map of the district the position can be estimated with reasonable accuracy. The host found itself encamped on a wide plain shelving gently down to a sandy beach, surrounded by high mountains except for one narrow gap by which they had entered. Guarding the gap there still exists one towerlike peak standing as though it were a lookout position and this is probably the place called Migdol — which means watch tower — in the account. Any pursuers would have to come also through that one narrow gap. Across the sea, six miles away, the Israelites

could just descry the opposite sandy shore and stony strip behind it, and beyond that the lofty rugged escarpment known as the *Shur* — the Wail — a plateau of mountain country with one upstanding peak which is probably Baal-Zephon — Lord of the North — thought to be some "high place" sacred to the Semitic god Baal. Thus was the precise place of crossing identified and there the people rested.

Here the forces of Pharaoh found them. The Egyptian monarch seems to have changed his mind again and decided upon measures to bring the escaped slaves back. Maybe the realisation of what the loss of six hundred thousand able-bodied workers would mean to him and his country weighed with him in this decision. Perhaps the news that they had, as he would have thought, mistaken their way and could not now get out of Egypt outweighed his fears. At any rate he got together a force of chariots and cavalry and set out in pursuit. It would take a day for a messenger from the garrison at Etham to reach the royal city Rameses and advise Pharaoh of the latest turn in events and two days for his forces to reach the Israelite camp from Rameses. "*And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid.*" (ch. 14.10).

There is a significant contrast at this point between the fear of panic-stricken people and the quiet faith of Moses. The people were certain they were to be slain; Moses went to God. He got his answer. "*Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.*" To go forward meant to walk into the sea but Moses was told to stretch out his rod over the sea and it would divide and the people could pass over on dry ground.

Some time must have elapsed whilst this instruction was passed to all the host and the Egyptians apparently conveniently waited meanwhile. They were probably in no hurry; so far as they could see they had the escaped slaves in a neat trap and they were most likely discussing necessary plans to marshal them into suitable groups for their orderly return to their old places of labour. Night was coming on and obviously nothing could be done until the morning, so the Egyptians pitched camp across the only exit from the plain and began to settle down for the night.

At this point the pillar of cloud and fire took up a position between the Egyptians and the Israelites. It was darkness to the Egyptians, says the narrative, but gave light to Israel a little later when they came to cross the sea. Perhaps the

storm clouds that had been drifting southward all day, leading the Israelites to their present position, came to a halt or changed their direction and hung over the Egyptian camp, turning the fading daylight into black night. Over the mountains beyond the sea the lightning flickered and flashed, a signal to Israel that there lay the way, and affording a comparatively clear if somewhat intermittent view of the heaving waters between. The Egyptians, convinced that nothing now could happen until morning, set guards, settled in their tents and went to sleep. Israel was wakeful, watching those flickering lights in the distance, wondering what God was doing, waiting. . . .

*"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left"* (ch. 14.21-22).

Here it is, the miracle which lived in Israel's memory for ever after and is perhaps the most celebrated of all the wonderful events of the Old Testament. What really happened?

The account is very precise and it is not difficult to reconstruct the situation. The host was facing a stretch of sea on a beach some seven miles long just south of the present Bitter Lakes, the water from coast to coast barely exceeding six or seven feet in depth. To the right, some fifteen miles away, lay the present head of the Red Sea at Suez, where the water was much deeper, and to the left, only a few miles to the north, the site of the present Bitter Lakes, where the water also was much deeper. The sea, probably about six miles wide at this point at the time, lay for some thirty-five miles in a valley between the Egyptian and the Sinai mountains, a valley not more than twenty miles wide running in a roughly north-south direction. And as night fell on that memorable day, there came down from the high table-land of Northern Sinai a tempestuous easterly or rather north-easterly gale (Hebrew knows only the four cardinal points of the compass) a gale which has been experienced also by modern travellers, which, deflected by the mountains bordering the Egyptian side, channelled itself at increasing force down the valley, driving back the waters toward what is now modern Suez and laying bare the seabed over the seven or more miles of shallow water. The water of the Bitter Lakes to the north would have had its level correspondingly lowered but there would still be a good depth of water there so that the

statement that the waters were a wall on their left and on their right (toward Suez) was literally true. They were a wall in the sense that no enemy could attack them from either side; only from the rear could they be pursued.

Israel, beholding that wonder, and still seeing the dazzling lights beyond the sea beckoning them on, as one man rounded up their cattle and gathered up their household goods, and over perhaps the entire seven mile stretch began to make their way across the sandy bed of the Red Sea. The wind blew all that night. If the people were extended along the entire length of that beach and went across as a body they would with all their cattle occupy an area at least seven miles wide by a mile deep; even so they could well have completed the six miles crossing in something like four hours. Level sand is usually quite firm after the water has left it, as witness our seaside beaches when the tide is out, but even so progress could not be expected to be other than slow. In that latitude and at that time of year darkness falls at 6 p.m. and allowing a few hours for the waters to be swept aside they might have got started by 10 o'clock. The last stragglers would have waded up the opposite beach by 2.30 or so the following morning. It would not have been an easy crossing; the wind was still blowing a gale, the lightning flashing and casting a vivid radiance over the eerie scene, with almost certainly the accompaniment of crashing thunder. It must have been a nightmare experience, and those who took part in it must have carried the memory with them for the rest of their days.

By that time one of the Egyptian sentries, making his rounds, most likely had his suspicions aroused and sent an investigating squad to reconnoitre the Israelite camp, which was probably a few miles away. The squad came back with the alarming news that the birds had flown and the sea-bed was bare. The latter phenomenon might have been no new thing to the Egyptians; what the wind had done that night it might very well have done previously. It certainly has done it again in later and even modern times. The records of the Suez Canal Company show that the level of the sea at Suez is subject to a maximum recorded variation of ten feet seven inches due to this same wind driving down this same valley, and a British Army surveyor in the late nineteenth century recorded seeing the surface of Lake Menzaleh in northern Egypt lowered by six feet due to the same cause. Some familiarity with this kind of happening may explain why the Egyptian cavalry did not hesitate to institute an immediate pursuit of the retreating Israelites who by now were probably nearly

at the other side. In order to fit the time indications given in the narrative it must have been nearly 2 a.m. when the pursuers in turn rode down the beach and started to cross the dry sea-bed.

Chariot wheels and sea sand, even firm sand, are probably not a good combination. It seems that the Egyptians found the going difficult. "In the morning watch," the story goes, the Lord looked at the host of the Egyptians and took off their chariot wheels so that the occupants were pitched out. The morning watch of the Hebrews was the period 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. It might be estimated that it was about 4 a.m. when the Egyptians began to say to each other, as the narrative has it, that they had best get back to shore for it was evident that the Lord was fighting for Israel. A new factor had come in to complicate the situation.

The wind had dropped!

As the force of the gale died down the banked up waters far out in the Red Sea to the south began to return. The sands became saturated with water and the erstwhile firm surface turned into treacherous quicksands. The Egyptians began to flounder in their desperate efforts to get

back to shore. According to verse 23 they had got to the midway point of the crossing so that they had something like three miles at least between themselves and safety.

"And the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared" (this expression denotes about 5 to 6 o'clock) "and the Egyptians fled against it. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh. There remained not so much as one of them". With the cessation of the wind, the sea would have returned from Suez in a roaring tidal wave which could easily have attained a speed of sixty miles an hour. The hosts of Pharaoh had no chance; no chance at all.

So, as the sun rose that morning Israel stood upon an unfamiliar sea-shore and looked across the rolling waters at the mountains of that Egypt which they had left for ever.

*To be continued*

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*The foregoing is an explanation and impression only of the physical event, how it happened. Its spiritual implications and the relation of New Testament references to the Red Sea crossing to the account in Exodus will appear in the next issue.*

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## IN THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

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Some considerations  
regarding worship

*"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwelleth in you . . . for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." (1 Cor. 3. 16, 17.)*

In these words the Apostle states very plainly that the temple of God in this Christian dispensation is not one "made with hands" but one composed of "living stones," with whom and in whom God dwells.

The spirit of God moves powerfully where His people assemble in true reverence, regardless of their material surroundings. His house is not a building, however beautifully that building may be furnished. He dwells with His people, and by His spirit dwells *in them*. In the words of the well-known hymn, "Such ever bring thee where they come, And going, take thee to their home." Wherever the Lord's people meet to study His Word in sincerity, as they perceive the glory and majesty of their God and the wonders of His grace, their material surroundings are of little concern to them. Their one desire is to know Him better, to serve Him more perfectly, and to bring forth *fruit* in their lives which shall be to His glory (John 15. 8; Gal. 5. 22, 23). This *fruit*

is the beauty that the Lord desires to see today in His temple of "living stones."

Paul says, "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. A minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8, 1, 2). The Lord Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, *there am I* in the midst of them" (Matt. 18. 20). He also said, "Ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father . . . the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4. 20-24). The prophet Isaiah tells us, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isaiah 57. 15). No mountain, city or building, marks the particular place for the worship of God, but "In every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him" (Acts 10. 35). The worship and devotion of such consists of a life of full, joyous, consecration to God, and He dwells with them.

They are His temple and precious in His sight. As such, we "have boldness to enter into the holiest" (not made with hands—Heb. 9. 24) "by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the House of God" we may draw near to God in full assurance of faith (Heb. 10. 19-22). If we love the Lord Jesus and keep His commandments, His sure promise is that we shall be loved by the Father and by Him, and they will make their abode with us (John 15, 21, 23). Where the Father and the Lord Jesus dwell, there is the true temple—the Sanctuary of God.

The early Christians in time of bitter persecution did not have or need specially furnished buildings in which to worship God. We know that they served and worshipped Him even when hiding in the catacombs. Faithful ones of the past worshipped and served God whilst they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented . . . in deserts, in mountains and in caves of the earth (Heb. 11. 36-39). When Jacob cried out, "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven," he had nothing like the cathedrals and churches of Christendom in mind. He was a fugitive, fleeing from Esau his brother, who had threatened to slay him. Coming to a certain place he had tarried all night because the sun was set. There, in the open, with stones for his pillow, he had lain down to sleep. While he slept he dreamed of a ladder set up on earth, reaching to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending it. He heard the voice of the Lord, the God of Abraham and Isaac, confirming to him the promises made to his fathers. Awakening from his sleep he said, "Surely the LORD is in this place . . . this is none other than the house of God" (Gen. 28. 10-17). God was in that place with Jacob because he was heir to the promises concerning the "land" and the "seed." There He gave Jacob the assurance, "I will not leave thee."

As "the children of the promise" and "heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 4. 28; 3. 29), we have the same assurance from the Lord. His presence is with us, not because we have some "holy" building in which to worship Him, but because we like Jacob are "heirs of the promise" (Heb. 6. 17). We are living stones, built up as a spiritual house, a people to shew forth His praises. When Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will build it again . . . He spake of the temple of his body" (John 2, 19-22).

Paul says, "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (I Cor. 3. 17). Peter says, "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (in all manner of behaviour"—*Rotherham*). "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body" (I Cor. 6. 19, 20).

When the Apostle advises us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but to exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching (Heb. 10. 19-25), he makes no mention of the need of a building furnished in some particular way. In fact he clearly shows in his Epistle that the earthly Tabernacle, beautiful building though it may have been, was but a figure of the true Tabernacle, serving its purpose in the Jewish Age. As Christians we enter into the spiritual things which were foreshadowed in that earthly Tabernacle and its arrangements. God has "raised" us up and seated us in the heavenlies in Christ" (Eph. 2. 4-6, *Rotherham*).

If we have an appreciation of such a living, vital, spiritual, relationship to our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, the place in which we are privileged to meet together will add little, if anything, to our blessing.

*"Father, where'er thy people meet,  
There they behold Thy mercy seat,  
Where'er they seek thee thou art found,  
And every place is hallowed ground."*

The life of a soldier, even on the alert and on duty, is by no means an easy life; nor do the Scriptures warrant any such expectation. On the contrary, they say "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"; "Fight the good fight of faith". And yet many Christian people seem to have the very opposite idea. Their ideal Christian life is one without a breeze or a storm; it must be one continuous calm. Such a life was indeed more possible in former days than now, though the world, the flesh and the Devil always have opposed them, and always have had to be resisted by every loyal soldier of the cross. But now the opposition is daily becoming more and more intense; for Satan realises that his time is short, and he is determined by any and every means to exert his power against the consummation of the Lord's plan for the exaltation of the Church.



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

Vol. 41, No. 6

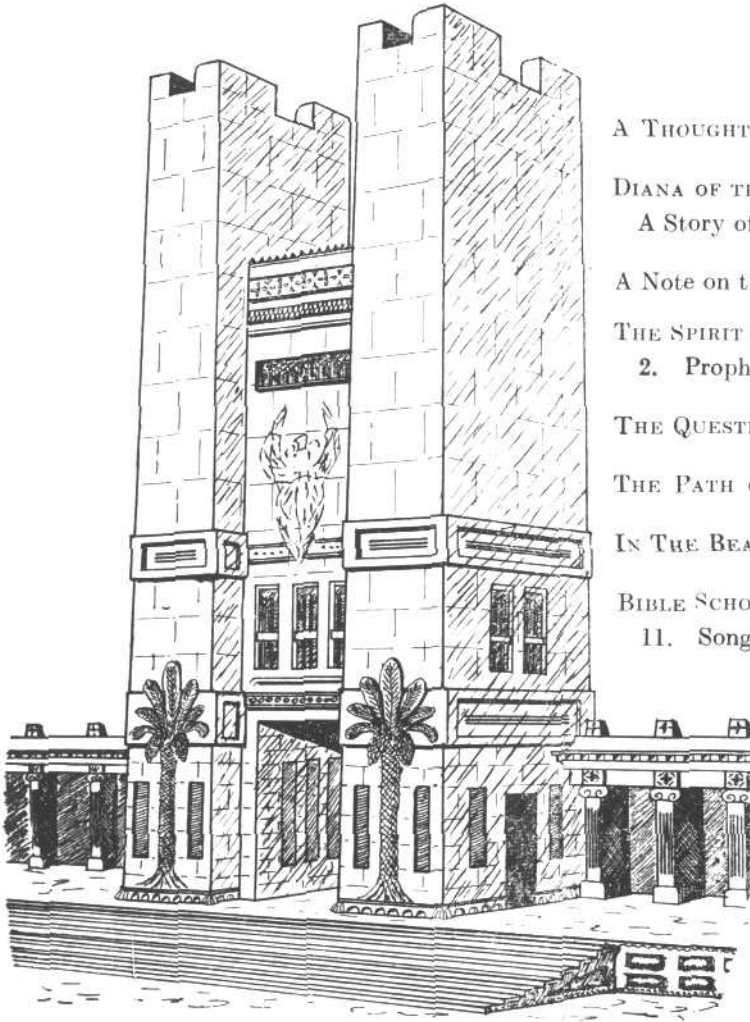
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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### A Thought for the Month

*"In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of evil consider. God also hath set the one over against the other, to the intent that man should discover somewhat at his latter end"* (Eccl. 7. 14).

The final phrase in that verse is not as rendered in the A.V. As there presented, it declares that God has arranged prosperity and adversity in order that man should find nothing at the end. That does not make sense, and in consequence this verse has been one of the obscure statements of Scripture. But modern Hebrew Bibles omit the prefix *lo* which is the negative, so that *lo-meumah*, meaning "nothing", becomes *meumah* which means "something, anything, somewhat". Now this opens the way to a notable reflection on the Divine way with man and the permission of evil. Prosperity and adversity have been set by God *"the one against the other"*, as though effecting the balancing of a scale by equal weights, *"to the intent that man should discover somewhat at his latter end"*. Prosperity and adversity in the Old Testament are indistinguishable from good and evil; the same Hebrew words—*tob* and *ra*—do duty for both ideas. The age-old question "Why does evil exist; why does God permit evil?" is answered in this verse, but man does not find the answer until his "latter end".

In the day of prosperity be joyful! There is good reason for accepting such of the good things of this life as come our way with joy and thanksgiving, and making use of them to the fullest degree. These things are the gifts of God, part of the design He has drawn up for the life of man. There is nothing meritorious in rejecting them for the sake of a too sombre view of religious devotion. And they can be means in our hands for the greater benefit of others. The Divine intention is for the happiness of mankind and in the final outworking that intention will be fully achieved. In the meantime we do well to make full use of such means of happiness as are afforded us by life as it is.

In the day of adversity be thoughtful and reflective! At such times life is of necessity lived in a minor key. The outward signs of exuberance can hardly be expected and are perhaps not appropriate, even although there is peace and content in the heart. This is the time for a more than usual quiet contemplation of the work of God both in the individual life and in the world. Adversity can develop character in a manner that the mere bestowment of gifts and blessings can never do. The fires of affliction can purify and temper a man's inner being so that he emerges at the end a better man than he would ever have been otherwise. Adversity tests and proves a man's inward strength; as Solomon said in Prov. 24. 10 *"If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is small."*

After this acceptance of the sunshine and shadow of life's experiences, the man is still left without the final achievement or even the final answer. There is a Divine law of recompense as there is one of retribution—what a man soweth that shall he also reap—but in neither case does the final balancing of accounts take place in this life. That must wait until man's latter end—which is of course really a new beginning, for there is much to come beyond the present proverbial threescore years and ten. One might ask why God does not give a more evident revelation of these things to man and so save the doubt and perplexity and unbelief. The answer to that is surely that too clear a revelation now would stultify man's progress toward that understanding which alone will make him fit for the life of the eternal ages. Like the emerging butterfly, struggling to free itself from the encumbering chrysalis, a struggle essential to bring its newly developed organs of flight into operation, so must man develop under the twin forces of prosperity and adversity if one day he is to emerge into the "glorious liberty of the children of God". In that manner, at last, man will *"discover somewhat at his latter end"*.

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**DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS**

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No. 13 in a series of  
stories of St. Paul

The Apostle Paul was about fifty-one years of age when he set out upon his third missionary journey, destined to lead him seven years later to his first trial—and acquittal—before the Emperor Nero at Rome. He could not have stayed at his home base of Antioch more than a few months following his second missionary journey, as a result of which he had been able to plant Christianity firmly in Greece. Now, as he set out along the high road leading northward from the city, he could hardly have known that he would never see Antioch again. The flourishing church which had taken the lead in missionary endeavour for so many years watched their most famous ambassador disappearing into the distance, little realising that they would sit under his ministry no more; never again see him in the flesh. From now onwards, the first Gentile church, the place where the name "Christian" was coined and first used, the community which above all others had grasped the vital truth that Christianity is essentially a missionary religion and had grown in spiritual strength and understanding of the faith beyond its fellow-church at Jerusalem in direct consequence of this realisation and the zeal with which it had instigated and supported missionary work, continued its course bereft of its greatest son. Antioch was a famous name in Christian history for many centuries after; the torch lit by Paul and Barnabas and Simeon and Lucius burned brightly for a long time, although at the last the false doctrines and the false brethren foreseen by the great Apostle gained the ascendancy and had their way. Little more than two centuries after those early Antiochian believers watched the figure of their beloved father in God disappear into the distance, another Paul, Paul of Samosata, lorded it as Bishop over the Church of Antioch, living in luxury and dissipation, introducing heresies of doctrine and conduct, and the bright light that had been the Church of Antioch burned low and went out.

How much of all this St. Paul's deep spiritual insight showed him must one day happen no man knows. Perhaps in any case his active mind was already working on the details of another problem. He had planted Christianity in two notable centres, apart from the many towns in which he had left

groups of believers, Antioch in Syria and Corinth in Greece. Now his eager steps were taking him in the direction of one more famous city of another great section of the ancient world, Iphesus in Asia. For the first few weeks he traversed the Asiatic hinterland in the provinces of Galatia and Phrygia, revisiting groups of disciples he had established during the course of his second missionary journey, but inevitably his steps were tending towards the cultural and commercial centre of Asia, where he had left Aquila and Priscilla at the time of his brief initial visit two years previously. Ephesus was the capital city of Roman Asia. Situated on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea and possessed of a fine natural harbour, it had become the terminus of several main roads and trade routes stretching far into the interior of Asia. From its quays merchant vessels carried the produce of Asia to Greece, to Egypt and to Rome. It was in consequence a city of trading and of markets, and the Jews were very much in evidence. Side by side with Greek paganism there flourished the worship of the One God, and the city's greatest architectural treasure, the Temple of Diana, looked down from the eminence on which it was built to the synagogues of the Jews. The cosmopolitan nature of the population gave opportunity for every kind of superstition and fanatical practice; of all the cities which figure in the travels of St. Paul this one was noteworthy for the extent to which sorcery, astrology and all forms of magical practices had obtained a hold, so that, like Corinth, it seemed a most unlikely place in which to expect any response to the preaching of the Gospel.

Nevertheless Ephesus shared with Corinth the distinction of being one of the most successful of Paul's missions. In later years the flourishing church established in this place by the Apostle was further blessed by the residence and ministry of the Apostle John, who ended his days here. It became the leading community of the informal federation known as the Seven Churches in Asia, and was to Roman Asia what Antioch was to Syria, a centre of ministry from which dedicated men journeyed in various directions ministering to the needs of local town churches. Writing to the church at Corinth, at this time, the letter known to us as the First Epistle to the

Corinthians, Paul said of his opportunities here "a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16. 9). It must have been with high hopes that he renewed his friendship with Aquila and Priscilla, and began to look out for opportunities to preach.

His first effective contact was a unique one. He came across a small company of believers in John the Baptist. They apparently knew of no developments beyond John's brief and tragic mission; the later Advent of Jesus of Nazareth was something with which they were quite unfamiliar. It is probable that this little group owed its origin to one or two disciples of John the Baptist who fled Judea after Herod's summary execution of their Master and settled in Ephesus, holding and teaching the message of their deceased leader, so that a quarter of a century later there were these dozen men modelling their lives around the baptism of repentance which John had preached. It is strange that Aquila and Priscilla had not already met them, but there were many Jews and a number of synagogues in Ephesus and it seems to have been the enquiring and penetrating instinct of Paul which found them wherever they were. Having encountered them, he quickly showed how the work of John found its sequel and fulfilment in that of Christ, and so these twelve men became the nucleus of the afterwards celebrated church of Ephesus.

As usual, Paul was at first well received in the synagogues; his preaching and exposition found willing hearers. Inevitably the dissentients began to make their voices heard and within three months the Apostle found his work being hindered by the objectors. The pattern of things was very familiar to him; he had seen it so many times before, and without hesitation he withdrew himself and his converts from the fellowship of the synagogues and established them in the lecture room of one Tyrannus. The word "school" in Acts 19. 9 is hardly the happiest word with its twentieth century connotation even although the Greek word here is the one which gives us our English word "school". The Greeks were very partial to discussions and debates on philosophical subjects and the building belonging to Tyrannus was obviously an establishment where such functions took place. Paul probably hired it for the regular meetings of his group as an ordinary commercial transaction; whether Tyrannus was Roman, Greek or Jew is not stated but the name is not a Jewish one and in the circum-

stances it is most probable that he was a Greek. At any rate, this arrangement subsisted for two years and the Christian community thus formed became a centre for missionary work; "all they that dwelt in Asia" (Roman Asia, more or less the western part of modern Turkey, not the whole of the present continental mass known as Asia) "heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (ch. 19. 10).

More Christians meant less pagans; less pagans meant a decreasing demand for certain miniature silver models of the inner temple enshrining the great goddess Diana. One Demetrius, a silversmith, finding sales dropping off, began to look with somewhat jaundiced eye on the crowds attending the meetings in the school of Tyrannus. He probably had no particular reverence for Diana himself, but business was business, and he could see his craft being seriously affected by the results of this Jewish preacher's eloquence. The outcome of his annoyance was a trade meeting of the master craftsmen and their employees addressed by Demetrius in terms which left no doubt of his concern; not only was their craft in danger of extinction, he claimed, but additionally—this must have been said unctuously—the worship of Diana was threatened and the Temple, one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, would lose its reputation and with that the city itself sink into oblivion. This happy combination of business and religion has in all ages formed ample justification for launching a crusade, and the present occasion was no exception. The meeting broke up to a tumultuous accompaniment of the city battle-cry "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" and the indignant metal-workers poured out of the building looking for trouble.

In a city like Ephesus there was never any lack of street loafers and others spoiling for a fight, and it was not long before the whole place was "filled with confusion" (ch. 19. 29). Somehow or other two of Paul's travel companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, both Greeks of Macedonia, came face to face with the mob and before they could grasp what had happened found themselves being rushed off to the "theatre", the huge open-air stadium which served as the venue for plays, sporting events and every other kind of public function. Next to the Temple of Diana, the Stadium at Ephesus was the city's chief glory. When excavated in modern times it was discovered that it could accommodate twenty-five thousand spectators. It is possible that

Gaius and Aristarchus found that most of the twenty-five thousand were present on this particular occasion.

News of the occurrence came quickly to Paul and he was for going into the stadium to the aid of his co-workers but was persuaded against doing so by "*certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends*" (ch. 19. 31). These "chief of Asia" were the Asiarchs, Greek officials of the Games, whose duty brought them into Ephesus at times when notable athletic events were due. They had considerable experience of mob rule in the stadium, and evidently felt the matter could be handled better with the unwitting cause of the trouble absent from the scene. It is worthy of note in passing that these very important Greek officials had formed an esteem for Paul and did not appear to view his threat to their religion and city in the same light as Demetrius and the populace.

Meanwhile the scene at the stadium remained one of unmitigated confusion. "*Some therefore cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together*" (ch. 19. 32). In the general disorganisation, Gaius and Aristarchus seem to have disappeared, for they are mentioned no more. In their place there appears one Alexander, put forward by the Jews—these latter, of course, representing the orthodox synagogue—to make some kind of defence to the concourse.

It is not clear whether Alexander was a Christian or an orthodox Jew. The fact that Jews were present at the stadium appears to infer that some of the orthodox community had come along to see vengeance meted out upon the Christians. Whether their presence further inflamed the mob, who were not likely to make much distinction between Christian Jew and orthodox Jew, and Alexander was one of their number chosen to justify their own position, or on the other hand he was a Christian the Jews had picked up and brought into the stadium as their contribution to the proceedings, is not known. Years later, writing to Timothy, St. Paul refers to an "*Alexander the coppersmith*" who "*did me much evil*". This Alexander had once held, then made shipwreck of, the faith, and was apparently a resident in Ephesus during Timothy's time of service there. This may have been the same man; at the time of the riot he may not yet have become a convert and being of the metal-working fraternity himself could well have been put forward as

the best person available to appease Demetrius and his fellows.

There was, however, to be no appeasement. From his attire it was plain that Alexander was a Jew. For the next two hours the concourse, "*with one voice*" kept up a continuous shout "*Great is Diana of the Ephesians*". There does not appear to have been any question of physical violence; the impression gained is that the working population had decided to make this a kind of one-day holiday and having crowded into the stadium intended to stay there and enjoy themselves.

At last the town recorder (the English "townclerk" is a very exact equivalent of the Greek office here) managed to restore order. Two hours' continuous exercise of the vocal chords was probably enough for the mob anyway. The thunderous shouting died away and a blessed stillness reigned. Perhaps even Demetrius and his comrades were a little scared of the storm they had raised. They listened now, rather shamefacedly maybe, to the measured reproof of this worthy civic official, who seems to have handled the matter very expertly. In the first place, he reminded them, it was a well-accepted fact throughout the Greek world that Ephesus was the city of Diana and there was no dispute about it. Secondly they had illegally apprehended two men who had transgressed no law and were entitled to the protection of the civic authorities. If Demetrius or anyone else had any kind of grievance against them there were the ordinary processes of law to which they had access; let them lay their accusation in the proper quarter and have the matter judicially determined. Thirdly, and most important, "*we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse*". That last remark must have brought Demetrius and his fellow business men up with a jerk. Ephesus was subject to Rome. Being the political capital of Roman Asia it was also the official residence of the Roman Governor, the "Pro-Consul" of Asia. Rome did not like disorderly conduct or the taking of the law by provincial citizens into their own hands. There might very well be an enquiry in this affair should the story reach the ears of the Governor and in that case the least the city could expect would be a heavy fine. When such a thing happened, since the authorities were not particularly concerned from which of the citizens the money came, and most of the working population had no money anyway, it was usually the business

men and the traders who had to pay up. Possibly Demetrius, on reflection, felt that this thing had gone altogether too far. There was at any rate no further trouble. When the townclerk "*had thus spoken he dismissed the assembly*". The enthusiasts for Diana who had raged into the stadium like lions went out like lambs. It is likely that the streets of Ephesus were models of order and rectitude for the next few days.

But the incident terminated Paul's work at Ephesus. He evidently felt, in the light of this

personal hostility to him, that the interests of the growing church would be better served by his absence rather than his presence. During his two years' residence in the city the Church had become well organised; there were several responsible men well able to fulfil every duty of the Christian ministry and the Apostle felt that he could now resume his travels. He took his leave of them and set sail for Macedonia.

(To be continued)

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## A NOTE ON THE DECREE OF CYRUS

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The celebrated "*Decree of Cyrus*" in which the Persian king gave a mandate for the return of the Jews to their own land and so ended the "Babylonian Captivity" in the year 536 B.C. has often been quoted as an evidence that Cyrus recognised the hand of God in his advancement to world dominion. The decree as quoted in Ezra 1. 2 certainly reads that way. "*The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up . . .*" There is no reason to suppose that the decree as thus stated is in any way fictitious; the Jews have always claimed that their restoration was due to Cyrus' conviction that he was called of God to restore them to their own land and they point to the prophecy in Isaiah 45 where Cyrus is even mentioned by name, nearly two centuries before the event, as proof that he was foreordained to fulfil this task.

It does seem, however, that in actual practice Cyrus was a bit of a diplomat in his dealings with the gods of antiquity. Whatever his feelings may have been as to the God of Israel, he was able to express himself in very similar terms with respect to other gods of other nations. On bricks used in his day for the restoration of the Temple of Sin, the moon god of the Babylonians, at Ur of the Chaldees, he had the following inscription impressed; some of the bricks remain to this day.

*"Sin, the illuminator of heaven and earth, with his favourite sign delivered into my hand the four quarters of the world, and I returned the gods to their shrines. The great gods have delivered all the lands into my hands; the land have I caused to dwell in a peaceful habitation."*

It seems that Cyrus was not above giving the credit for his victories to each of the gods in turn; playing for safety, perhaps, on the principle that upon this basis he could hardly fail to be right. More likely there was a hint of political expediency. He had just conquered the empire of Babylon and added it to his own; any means of conciliating the varied races and peoples now under his rule would be useful. When dealing with Israel he gave the praise to the God of Israel. When dealing with the people of Ur he gave it to their own special god. Sin, the moon-god, from time immemorial had been closely associated with Ur. In each case he gave orders for the rebuilding of the national Temple.

None the less Cyrus was definitely a tool in the hand of a Higher Power. God truly had given him all the kingdoms of the world. More than a century before his birth the Lord through Isaiah had said of him "*he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple. Thy foundation shall be laid.*" And the Lord went on to say "*I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.*" (Isa. 44. 28, 45. 1-4). That passage in Isaiah is a noteworthy example of the prophetic foresight of God, but no more remarkable than His prediction through the prophet Jeremiah, who promised Israel that their captivity to Babylon would endure for seventy years and then they would be restored to their own land, all of which came to pass exactly as foretold. It is a fascinating conjecture, and a highly probable one, that Daniel showed Cyrus all these prophecies and fired him with the ambition to play the part so foretold of him.

## THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

### 2. Prophetic Foresight

A series of notes on the principles underlying prophetic interpretation

The class of prophecy to which is applied the description "prophetic foresight" is that which foretells events yet to happen in the affairs of men, and which is described in word or writing by the prophet but is not the result of visions or dreams. It has to do chiefly with the affairs of this world, and generally has some direct relation with the condition of the world in the prophet's own day. Although the influence of the Holy Spirit is behind the giving of such prophecy, its utterance is also dependent upon the prophet's own foresight into the affairs of men and nations, and his observation of world or national events. It follows therefore that such a man is not a recluse or a mystic, retiring from contact with the world and its affairs into a secret retreat of his own, confining his thoughts and his utterances to the unseen things of God's spiritual world, but one who takes a lively and intelligent interest in the events of his day and concerns of his fellow-men. It is for this reason that we find prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel closely connected with the political affairs of their day and often holding high office in the State. This does not mean that Christians to-day are necessarily called to follow their example in this respect; it does mean that such a station in life was God's will for them and had its place in the orderly development of His Plan.

This class of prophecy, then, is mainly concerned with predictions of the course of world history during the progress of this "present evil world" up to its close and the establishment of the Kingdom. Prophecies concerning the "Kingdom Age", the Millennial Age, are usually of a different nature, based upon visions. The scenes of the coming Age rise before the prophet's eyes so that he can describe what he actually sees. The type of prophecy now being considered does not come by means of such visions, but from the illumination of an already instructed mind by the power of the Holy Spirit. The prophet lays himself out to be the recipient of Divine instruction concerning the future by studiously observing current events and diligently learning the lessons of past history, the knowledge of human action and reaction thus obtained enabling him intelligently to receive the information regarding the future that the Holy Spirit is waiting to impart.

Such a man must therefore, and first of all, acquire a knowledge of those Divine principles which ought to govern the conduct of earthly affairs. He must become a student of Divine Law, and this involves diligent study of the Scriptures. He must also be an observer of the habits and lives of his fellow-men, and of world conditions and events, and, applying the Divine principles to them, perceive how every infraction of those principles is reflected in the further degeneration of the human race. From this he learns how to deduce the probable outcome of the state of affairs in the world as it exists in his own time, and to warn his fellows of the dangers of the course of conduct they are following. This is so often the burden of those Hebrew prophets who lived in the days of the monarchy, from David to Zedekiah, and onward to the end of Old Testament history, that nearly all the books from Isaiah to Malachi have predominantly the same note. "*Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*" (Isa. 59. 2). "*And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear . . . I will even send a curse upon you . . . saith the Lord of Hosts*" (Mal. 2. 1-4). Therefore "*woe to them that go down to Egypt for help*" cries Isaiah (31. 3) referring to Judah's leaning toward political alliance with Egypt at that time "*but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel*". He goes on to predict that the power of Egypt shall fail, and with that failure Judah will fall also. "*When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.*" The rulers and the people of Israel took no notice of his words then, but they must have remembered them a few years later when Sennacherib's general stood with his army outside the walls of Jerusalem and declaimed in tones of the bitterest sarcasm "*Lo, thou trustest in the staff of that broken reed, on Egypt, whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it; so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him*" (Isa. 36. 6). And it was then that Isaiah's prophetic foresight was doubly vindicated, for in the same breath that he had declared woe to Judah for going to Egypt for help he also predicted a great Divine deliverance. "*As birds flying, so*

*will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem . . . passing over he will preserve it . . . then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword"* (31. 5 and 8). That prediction was fulfilled in the celebrated destruction of Sennacherib's host in one night outside the walls, and his own violent death at the hands of an assassin (37. 36-38). The entire section, chapters 20 to 37 of Isaiah, covering a period of some thirty years from Sargon's campaign against Ashdod (20. 1) to Sennacherib's death, is a splendid example of this particular type of prophecy. Isaiah's shrewd summing up of the situation, added to the influence of the Holy Spirit, working on his mind, enabled him correctly to estimate the immediate political consequences of his countrymen's attitude and also to foresee ultimate Divine intervention.

In a very real sense, therefore, these prophets were in the world, mixing freely with their own fellows, maintaining a lively interest in events and trends of the day, whilst most definitely not being of the world. In this their lives are an example to us, for we too, if we would be "as men that wait for their lord" must needs have that same lively interest in the changing panorama of world events, and the same aptitude for correctly interpreting that panorama in the light of Divine prophecy, as did they. We therefore cannot assent to the principle of the monastic life, one that demands withdrawal into a pious seclusion, seeing and hearing nothing of what goes on in the world outside. Our Christianity must be vigorous and practical, based upon a recognition that we are God's warriors in this world and His witnesses testifying to the utter inadequacy of any system other than His coming Kingdom for the bringing of life and happiness to men.

Nevertheless we must realise that not all believers are called to observe the changing of prophecy into history with that clear-sightedness which is so characteristic of the Hebrew prophets. All do not possess the powers of intellect so to understand world events. It must always be true that the many will obtain their understanding of these things from the relative few whose natural talents, consecrated to God and so amenable to the power of the Holy Spirit, can be so used for the assistance of their fellows. So it must have been in the days of natural Israel. There were many pious, God-fearing Israelites, students of the Scriptures, waiting and looking for the coming Kingdom, but they were not by any means all Isaiahs or Jeremiahs. One or two prophets in a generation were all

that God needed then; and so now, "*God hath set the members in the body as it hath pleased him*" and all members have not the same office.

There are many striking examples of this kind of prophecy in the Scriptures. The story of Jeremiah and Hananiah is one such (see Jer. 28). Hananiah had promised that within two full years the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would be broken and Judah would be free. Jeremiah replied that the prediction was false, that the yoke would not be broken; moreover, since Hananiah had prophesied falsely, he would die within that same year. Two months later Hananiah did die—and the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar did remain on Judah for seventy years. Jeremiah gauged the power of Babylon more correctly than did Hananiah; and he knew that in consequence of Judah's transgression the "seventy years" of captivity was to come upon them. So far his prophetic foresight aided him in coming to a true conclusion. But his knowledge that Hananiah was to die within a few months reveals the illumination of the Holy Spirit, guiding his mind so that the prediction he uttered was not entirely of himself, but was inspired and directed of God.

Now because it is true that history repeats itself, that the sequel to a set of conditions existing in the world at one time is so often matched by the sequel to the same set of conditions existing at another time, it is oft-times the case that the prophecy of an Old Testament seer, intended to refer to his own people and generation, becomes equally applicable to another people and generation where the same conditions obtain. It would seem that God has caused to be recorded such prophecies to the deliberate end that they be so used for the instruction of later generations of God's people. Thus when Jesus gave his famous prophecy of the End Time on the Mount of Olives He cast His words in a mould which also fitted the events about to befall the people of Judea in His own day. The ending of the Jewish Age was an anticipation in miniature of the ending of the Gospel Age. Hence much of the prophecy in Matt. 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 has a double application, one in miniature to the events of A.D. 70, and another, on a greater scale, to the events of the present time. Another case that comes readily to mind is the promise of Malachi that God would send Elijah before the coming of the day of the Lord. Jesus said that this prophecy was fulfilled in His own day (Matt. 11. 19) and yet it is clear that a further fulfilment must be

expected at the end of this Age.

It does not follow that every prophecy must of necessity be applied in this fashion. The Book of Nahum is a case in point. Nahum, who lived with his brethren of the Captivity in the mountainous country north-east of Nineveh, a generation or so after the Ten Tribes had been transported from their own land, broke into a passionate denunciation of Nineveh and foretold its coming destruction. From his own observation he knew that its iniquity had come to the full. The great repentance of the time of Jonah was at least a hundred and fifty years in the past and the city had long since gone back to its bad ways. Nahum sensed that the time of judgment had come, and in three short chapters he foretold, in superb language, the coming destruction. The whole of his predictions were fulfilled within the next half century, and with that fulfilment the prophecy served its purpose. There is nothing in it to justify its application to events at this end of the Age, and nothing in later Scriptures to authorise its use as such a prophecy.

Isaiah's and Jeremiah's prophecies of the fall of Babylon constitute an instance of the opposite principle. Their vivid descriptions of Divine judgment upon that city are used in the Book of Revelation in a setting which points unmistakably to the end of the Age. We can therefore, if we wish, take these prophecies to have a double application, in the first place to the literal overthrow of the literal city—and although Jeremiah spoke more than fifty years before the event his

words were wonderfully and accurately fulfilled—and in the second place to the downfall of the great world system of evil which Babylon so fitly pictured.

We need therefore to view these "political" prophecies against the background of the times in which, and the circumstances under which, they were written, to note what use is made of them by later Biblical writers of the New Testament, and then decide whether or no a particular prophecy is intended to convey a meaning beyond its purely local one. We may have to give up some cherished interpretations in the process, but the prophecies that we do accept as having definite bearing upon our own day and time will become fraught with deeper meaning and rest upon a more secure because more logical basis than before. Some knowledge of the history of the prophet's own period is therefore essential when it comes to interpreting such prophecies, and because the knowledge of such history is constantly being amplified by research and discovery it follows that our understanding of the subject will be subject to clarification as time goes on; the interpretations of the nineteenth century commentators are often quite out of date in the twentieth.

*The next article in this series is entitled "Visions and Dreams" and will examine the difference between "prophets" and "seers" and the conditions under which holy men of old have received revelations regarding things to come.*

## THE WIDOWS MITE

These words are part of the commendation Jesus uttered concerning the poor woman who cast her two mites into the Temple treasury. Rich men, out of their abundance, were casting therein lavish gifts, but they still had a plentiful reserve. This poor woman cast in all she had (Mark 12. 44).

We may be inclined to take it for granted that she was old—and alone—as well as poor. But that need not be the case, for there is poverty to-day in Palestine among the young, of equal intensity to this of the poor woman of whom Jesus spake. One such, whose husband had been killed in some rioting, was left with four young children, whose "whole living" consisted of just "five olive trees".

No widow's pension or government relief was available to meet her need, and all she had to meet the requirements of five appe-

tites was the produce of five olive trees. One day an Englishman, passing near a group of Arab women, heard the very phrase, in Arabic, which, in the Arabic Version of the New Testament translates the words of both Mark and Luke. Voices carry far in the clear air of Palestine, and only a deaf person could fail to listen to some conversations. These Arab women were discussing the predicament in which a young friend had been placed by the death of her husband.

She was left with nothing more in the world than a small share in a vineyard, and that, said the speaker, was "*kull ma'ishitha*"—the exact phrase of Mark and Luke rendered into Arabic.

Two mites was the entire income of the poor Jewess whom Jesus praised. From what source it came we do not know, but be that as it may, this meagre sum was her "all". Out of her dire poverty she gave more than they all.

## ? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4. 24). Are there two aspects of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit and the Spirit which is God?

\* \* \*

A. It is unfortunate that the A.V. translators chose to put the indefinite article "a Spirit" here, for it introduces the idea of the Divine personality, which was not what Jesus was talking about. What He really said was "God is spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit". The woman had been talking about the rival claims of Samaria and Jerusalem as the place where men should worship God. Jesus told her that these were but material temples where worship was along lines of ritual with vestments and sacrifices and so on. True worshippers, He said, worship God, in spirit without outward trappings, because God Himself is not material, He is spirit. As such, He is incomprehensible to man; we cannot imagine or visualise God except in terms of earthly images but we have two means of contact with God. He is made known to us, revealed or manifested to us, in the Person of the Son, to us the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom alone enduring life comes to us. His power and work is exerted through the Holy Spirit, which is to us God working in creation and in the hearts of His children. We do not well therefore in trying to differentiate between God the Spirit and the Holy Spirit of God; rather should we say that the Holy Spirit of God is God manifesting His Divine power in active operation in His creation. When the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the abyss in creation (Gen. 1) that was God working powerfully to form the world. When in a future day God pours out His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2. 28) that is the power of God working in the hearts of all men to worldwide conversion and salvation. When the Apostle Paul speaks of the Spirit of God dwelling in us, the believers (Rom. 8. 9), that is God working in us to transform our hearts and minds into conformity with Himself that we might be partakers of His holiness. Whatever we see of God in

action, that is the Holy Spirit in our world or in our lives or in our sight. Whatever is revealed or manifested to us of the character, the love, the goodness of God, all that shows us what God is, that is the Son, the means by which we know the Father and are known of Him.

Q. "There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another" (1 Cor. 15. 40). What is the meaning of the words "celestial" and "terrestrial"?

\* \* \*

A. In plain English heavenly and earthly. "Celestial" comes from the Latin "caelestis", meaning heavenly, and "terrestrial" from the Latin "terra", the earth. It would seem that the translators of the Authorised Version used the Latin words as rather more appropriate to the loftiness of the Apostle's theme. In the Greek the words are *epourania* (belonging to the heavens) and *epigeia* (belonging to the earth), so that in "celestial" and "terrestrial" we really have very correct Latin translations of the Greek. With our own understanding of the distinction between human and spiritual natures it may be that these words are more descriptive than the every-day "heavenly" and "earthly". To speak of a heavenly being may easily call to mind the picture of a glorified man descending from the skies, somewhat along the lines of the old idea that the spiritual body is merely a glorified physical body. The terms "celestial being" and "terrestrial being" may better fit the fact that there are two separate and distinct planes of being, each having its own characteristic inhabitants, fitted and adapted to their own environment and ordained by God to be forever the glory of those environments—angels, "celestial beings" in heaven, and men, "terrestrial beings" on earth. But in reading the passage, we are certainly literally correct if we use the every-day English words, and read: "There are also heavenly bodies, and bodies of earth; but the glory of the heavens is one, and the glory of the earthlies is another".

## THE PATH OF THE JUST

*A discussion on the principles of Christian progress*

*"The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. 4. 18).*

Admission to the privileges of Christian fellowship is limited by almost every religious community to those who will conform to certain standards of belief. Sometimes the set standard has a wide basis—nothing more than acceptance of Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour and belief that by that acceptance the believer has "received salvation"; has been "born again". Sometimes the standard set is almost inconceivably narrow, demanding rigid adherence to a comprehensive theology which purports to set out a detailed exposition of all God's dealings, past, present and future; a code of conduct which takes no account of the changing world around; insistence upon the absolute necessity of outward symbols, such as baptism, before the prospective believer can be counted as one of "the flock". Between these extremes there is represented in Christendom a varied range of standards, and to those who view their relationship to each other as dependent upon their relationship to the Lord Jesus and who desire to attain a correct perception of His Will, it becomes very necessary to have a clear view of the varied aspects and requirements of Christian discipleship. Only thus shall we be able to discern our own place in the Master's vineyard, and, discerning, labour acceptably in His service.

Among Christian disciples there are various outlooks and differing understandings of the "call" to follow Christ. In the first place there are those who believe and cultivate the ethics of His teachings, the virtues described by Paul as the "fruits of the Spirit" (Gal. 5. 22), love, joy, peace, and so on, but who go through life without feeling any burning urge to become workers for Christ. The call to ambassadorship finds no responsive chord. The joy of converting the unbeliever, of assisting the first faltering steps of "babes in Christ" is one which is never theirs. The Christian life is to them a placid existence in which the calm enjoyment of saintly virtue is a shield and barrier against the ugly things of this world, and whilst they look up to the Lord Christ with reverence and adoration they do not see at His feet the bending figures of broken-hearted sinners who come to Him

for healing.

In the second place, there are those, having fully appreciated the essentially missionary spirit of Christ's teaching, who have found on the basis of a complete and whole-hearted surrender to Him an outlet for their love and zeal in one of two general directions. They either engage in some form of social service, applying practical Christianity to the immediate material needs of men's bodies, or they become evangelists and missionaries, seeking to satisfy the cravings of men's minds for a sense of re-union with God. There is not much of an intellectual nature in this, for the majority who will listen to such a missionary need food for the heart and not for the head; hence "bright Gospel services", the preaching of "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified", fully satisfies the desire manifested by such for a sense of freedom from the power of sin and the certainty of ultimate salvation. The work of great revivalists like Dwight L. Moody was of this kind. No deep theology, no striking revelation of the purpose of God for man; yet a spiritual revival of such dimensions that without doubt it had much to do with the general ripening of Christian character which made the closing years of the nineteenth century so remarkable a period in the history of the faith.

Thirdly, there are those disciples, generally of a studious, reverent or mystic turn of mind, who seek to know God's plans for the future. Such a desire is a commendable one. "*Surely the Lord will do nothing but He revealeth His secrets to His servants the prophets.*" (Amos 3. 7). Here is clear indication that the Father does reveal His purposes to those who are in the proper frame of mind to listen. The constant reiteration of the command to "*Watch—for ye know neither the day nor the hour.*" (Matt. 25. 13), to be as watchers on the walls of the city (Hab. 2. 1) and to seek as did Daniel to "*know by books the number of the years*" (Dan. 9. 2), is sufficient to assure every earnest student that the study of Divine laws and purposes is fraught with blessing to the one who seeks.

This third class of disciples is that the members of which will take the most intelligent interest in the whole Plan of God and are prepared to give time and thought and energy to the consideration of the underlying

principles of Divine revelation. Such will have the clearest idea of the ultimate purpose of God's creation and can, more than any other, give a reasonable answer to the enquirer. Accused as they are of being "not practical" or of ignoring the opportunities of Christian social service or the winning of unconverted ones to the standard of Christ, it is nevertheless true that the work they are doing is of vital importance in the further development of God's plan. "God at the first did visit the Gentiles (nations) to take out of them a people for His name" says James (Acts 15. 14), and much of the New Testament is occupied with exhortations to this class of believers to give heed to their continued growth in grace and knowledge, that in due time they may become the Divine ambassadors when God "returns" (Acts 15. 16) to convert the nations.

The administrative and uplift work of the Millennial Age will require a Ministry of Reconciliation (2 Cor. 5. 18), the members of which are fitted in every respect for their work. They will have been "perfected through suffering" and in all the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit; will have been made copy likenesses of God's dear Son. That inward grace and heart harmony with God must be allied with a positive knowledge of God's laws and purposes so that they may be real instructors of the people. "They that be wise" said Daniel (12. 2), "shall shine as the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever". It was so with our Lord, for "by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, when he shall bear away (Heb.) their iniquities" (Isa. 53. 11) in the Millennial Age. Made "like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2. 17) it is by His positive knowledge of the evils of sin and of the beneficence of righteousness that our Lord becomes a "merciful and faithful High Priest", and so shall it be with His followers. It should be readily agreed then that of all the varied kinds of Christian disciples those who consecrate to do the Will of God and endeavour in the course of their consecrated life to attain a fair and true understanding of the Divine Plan are likely to be the best fitted for ultimate control—to reign with Christ. This is the purpose of the High Calling of this Gospel Age—to select a consecrated body of disciples who "know what their lord doeth" (Luke 12. 47), and so are ready to be used in His purposes when the time comes.

This is the reason that study of the Scriptures cannot be separated from the "High Calling" and our Christian life. Some bemoan

the fact that so much time is taken up with the study of the Word to the exclusion of more "practical" manifestations of Christianity. It is unfortunately only too true that the "students" are often the least practical of all Christians and sometimes tend to become "mystics" without any practical outlook on the world around them at all. A clear understanding of the Truth should point to a proper balance between mere studiousness, the accumulation of knowledge, and the practical outworking of that knowledge. We need always to remember that the sincerity of our belief in the standards of the Millennial Age will be measured in large degree by our endeavour to put them into practice in this world to-day; and the learning we gather from the fountain of all Truth has failed in its purpose if we do not manifest forth the Word of life to others around in some degree almost at once.

In order to preserve this proper balance between head and heart it is vital that the Divine way of imparting truth is clearly understood. There are two possible methods which God could have chosen. He could impart the knowledge of His Plan by direct revelation to each individual, in which case there would be no necessity for study and discussion, for thought and meditation, for pastors, teachers, evangelists, helpers. (Eph. 4. 11). On the other hand He could allow His truth to penetrate men's minds gradually as their powers of understanding developed, feeding upon that which had already been made known and had been assimilated. Which method has God adopted?

The laws of Nature point to the latter process as that which characterises all God's creation. Our Lord sketched a word picture when he likened His message to seed which was scattered and lay dormant, and then germinated, a man not knowing how, until at length it made its way through the earth "first the blade, then the ear" (Mark 4. 28). Another eloquent lesson lay concealed in His action when, taking a little child and setting him in the midst, He said to His disciples "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven". The earth itself was not brought into existence in a moment of time. The splendour and variety of trees and plants, of animals and birds, did not appear in all their present glory at one word from the lips of the Almighty. The story of the rocks reveals how creation progressed in a logical and orderly manner. The bare, lifeless earth existed for countless ages before even the humblest form of life appeared on

its surface. Mosses and ferns appeared before the trees. Humble denizens of the oceans swarmed and multiplied long before any great air-breathing animal roamed the forests and prairies. Ungainly flying reptiles hovered uncertainly in the air before any of the brilliant chorus of birds made their songs heard above the tree-tops. Man himself, the glory and crown of earthly creation, was the last arrival of all upon our planet. All this is described with unparalleled simplicity and eloquence in the first chapter of Genesis.

So with the development of the promised "seed". At first but a hazy glimmer of hope, the seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3. 15). Then a definite and detailed promise, given to Abraham the friend of God (Gen. 12. 3), a chosen nation, to be the custodian of God's oracles (Rom. 3. 2), and a kingly line of whom should come that Seed (Jer. 23. 5), until finally in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus the promise became a reality. Even then a further development came into view, for now we perceive that Christ has many members, and we, Christian disciples of this age, are those members (1 Cor. 12. 27), and if we be Christ's then we also are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3. 29).

We are often reluctant to admit this progressive and unfolding nature of Divine Truth. Human pride is much more flattered by the desire to believe that God has chosen us as specially favoured individuals to be granted a special and exclusive revelation which no one else can possibly receive, than it is to recognise the fact that our standing in Divine Truth at all is due to the labours of earlier disciples who laid the foundation of our present standing. In our natural reaction from errors of doctrine which we have cast aside in the light of this day we oft times fail to give sufficient credit for the good work done by our predecessors in Christian service and ministry. Our Lord recognised that principle when he said "*I send you forth to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour. Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours*", (Jno. 4. 38). Many believe that in this day they have seen a harvest work accomplished and perchance have taken a share in the reaping. Do we always realise as much as we should that that harvest was made possible by the labours of earnest Christian men in past centuries—yea, even those whom we sometimes criticise for too great a zeal in their service and not sufficient attention to a deeper doctrinal understanding

of the Word of God.

This appreciation of the essentially progressive development of our understanding of Truth is the key to New Testament teaching. Paul's exposition of doctrine contained all the essentials, but he left it to each reader to interpret for himself in the light of his own generation and environment those expressions and figures which Paul adopted to convey his meaning to Christians of the first century. To a Church which had been brought up under the strict discipline of Judaism the message of Christ came expressed in types borrowed from the Tabernacle ceremonies, and much more easily understood therefore by Jews than by Gentiles. We in this day must study the Levitical ritual of Exodus and Leviticus before we can appreciate the deeper spiritual teaching of the Book of Hebrews. Paul expounded the truth regarding the "Ransom for All" in terms taken from Mithraism, a philosophy well known to his Gentile readers but almost unknown to us today. To the illiterate and uneducated masses of Western Europe the "Passion plays" of the Middle Ages were the only effective means of teaching Scripture truth, and so it happened that men and women unable to read or hear the Bible in their own language, gazed upon the winged and white-robed angels, and horned and tailed devils, of those plays and built their conception of Heaven and Hell around the things which they saw. How deeply those things were impressed is shown by the fact that to-day, several centuries after reading has become almost universal in England, there are still many Christians who think of the spiritual world in those same terms. John Bunyan believed whole-heartedly in the things about which he wrote, yet who could doubt his fervent spirit was truly in tune with that Lord to whom he was given in complete surrender, even although we in this day could by no means endorse his theology.

Present Truth is built upon this foundation, and to remain and continue in Present Truth it is essential to hold that, first, the essential principles of Divine Truth were revealed to the Apostles and laid down by them for all time, and expressed in language fitted to the generation which first heard them; second, that in every age those principles need to be re-expressed in words and terms fitted to that age, that the spiritual truth behind the words may be truly appreciated. Luther believed in transubstantiation, that the bread and wine of the sacrament became in very truth the body and blood of our Lord. Wesley saw a

deeper significance in the call to "eat of that bread and drink of that cup" and proclaimed the necessity for personal surrender to Christ. Later Christian leaders elaborated that understanding until in the nineteenth century, personal association with Christ, now and for ever, a complete and utter abandonment of ourselves to the service and instruction of the Good Shepherd, was seen to be the real participation in bread and cup which our Lord had in mind when first he said to the disciples "*This cup is my blood of the new covenant. Drink ye all of it*". And who shall say that there is not an even deeper understanding of this mystic association with Christ, awaiting us when we are ready to receive it, reconciling past perplexities and leading us still farther along the shining pathway of Truth?

Unless we realise and follow this principle there can be no progress in Truth. How true it is that attempts are often made to stop at some point to which Christian believers have attained and to discourage further research and progress. The tendency is always to rest satisfied with progress made and to withdraw from the constant struggle of pioneering. But the very nature of Christian thought is to burst the bonds and grow, and if an outlet is not provided then the result will be that declared by the Master Himself in His story of the new wine in the old wine skins (Luke 5. 37). It is not often noticed that He did not condemn the old wine as bad, nor the old wineskins as useless. What he did say was that *old wine* is the right thing to keep in old wineskins, and that both are then preserved. *New wine* should go into *new* wineskins, and then both will adjust themselves to each other peaceably.

Our Lord knew that His teaching would take out from amongst the Jewish system a "remnant" who had already learned all that Judaism could teach them and were reaching out to further advances in the knowledge of God's Plan. He knew also that the vast majority were not yet ready for this further revelation of Divine Truth and in His wisdom left the old wine to the old wineskins. Now be it noted that there were certain essential doctrines which were common both to the old Jewish faith and to the new faith which was to supersede it. That there was one God, and that men were sinners, unreconciled to God; that the Seed of Abraham was to bless all families of the earth and that God had appointed a chosen people through whom He would execute that purpose—all these things

were held as truth alike by Jew and Christian. Nevertheless the Christian from his advanced standpoint held beliefs and expectations which the Jew never enjoyed. So with us in our own day. Whilst there is much that is held in common between all Christian believers, there are also things which are the heritage only of those who have been blessed with a deeper and more "up-to-date" knowledge of the Divine Plan.

We must learn therefore to respect the beliefs and convictions of our fellow believers whilst standing quite firmly by our own. More than ever does this become necessary in the case of those who differ on matters which may at first sight appear to be fundamental. When misunderstandings are cleared up and care taken fully to appreciate each other's point of view, the seemingly irreconcilable opposites are often perceived to be different ways of expressing the same fundamental truth. We must learn to draw a clear distinction between the *truths* of the faith which have never varied and can never vary, and the many methods of expressing those truths which do vary from age to age and between believer and believer. Thus, and thus only, will it be true that "*we all, with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*" (2 Cor. 3. 18).

*"The outworn rite, the old abuse,  
The pious fraud transparent gown,  
The good held captive in the use  
Of wrong alone—*

*These wait their doom, from that great law  
Which makes the past time serve to-day:  
And fresher life the world shall draw  
From their decay.*

*"But life shall on and upward go;  
Th' eternal step of Progress beats  
To that great anthem, calm and slow,  
Which God repeats*

*God works in all things; all obey  
His first propulsion from the night:  
Wait thou and watch! the world is grey  
With morning light!"*

(Whittier, 1846)

---

To be loyal to the Truth and yet faithfully to recognise the equal rights of all men to free thought and free speech is not always an easy task.

## IN THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

*Some considerations  
regarding worship*

*"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwelleth in you . . . for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."* (1 Cor. 3. 16, 17).

In these words the Apostle states very plainly that the temple of God in this Christian dispensation is not one 'made with hands' but one composed of "living stones", with whom and in whom God dwells.

The place where Christians meet for devotion, to study the Word of God or hear it expounded, is often spoken of as "the House of God", as though He in a particular sense dwells there. For this reason it is sometimes claimed that our meeting-places should be so furnished and decorated as to give them the atmosphere of quietness and dignity usually associated with "the House of God". Whilst all would agree that the places where we meet should be suitably furnished and decorated it is certainly a great mistake to think that any amount of "sacred" furnishing and decoration of these could add any beauty and dignity to the *real* house or temple of God, or to His true worship.

The spirit of God moves powerfully where His people assemble in true reverence, regardless of their material surroundings. His house is not a building, however beautifully that building may be furnished. He dwells with His people, and by His spirit dwells *in them*. In the words of the wellknown hymn, "*Such ever bring thee where they come, And going, take thee to their home*". Wherever the Lord's people meet to study His Word in sincerity, as they perceive the glory and majesty of their God and the wonders of His grace, their material surroundings are of little concern to them. Their one desire is to know Him better, to serve Him more perfectly, and to bring forth *fruit* in their lives which shall be to His glory (John 15. 8; Gal. 5. 22, 23). This *fruit* is the beauty that the Lord desires to see to-day in His temple of "living stones".

Paul says, "We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. A minister of *the sanctuary* and of *the true tabernacle*, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8. 1, 2). The Lord Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, *there am I in the midst of them*" (Matt. 18. 20). He also said, "Ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at

Jerusalem, worship the Father . . . the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4. 20-24). The prophet Isaiah tells us, "*Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit*" (Isaiah 57. 15). No mountain, city or building, marks the particular place for the worship of God, but "*In every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him*" (Acts 10. 35). The worship and devotion of such consists of a life of full, joyous, consecration to God, and He dwells with them. They *are* His temple and precious in His sight. As such, we "have boldness to *enter into the holiest*" (not made with hands—Heb. 9. 24) "by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the House of God" we draw near to God in full assurance of faith (Heb. 10. 19-22). If we love the Lord Jesus and keep His commandments, His sure promise is that that we shall be loved by the Father and by Him, *and they will make their abode with us* (John 15. 21, 23). Where the Father and the Lord Jesus  *dwell, there is the true temple—the Sanctuary of God.*

The early Christians in time of bitter persecution did not have or need specially furnished buildings in which to worship God. We know that they served and worshipped Him even when hiding in the catacombs. Faithful ones of the past worshipped and served God whilst they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented . . . in deserts, in mountains and in caves of the earth (Heb. 11. 36-39). When Jacob cried out, "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven", he had nothing like the cathedrals and churches of Christendom in mind. He was a fugitive, fleeing from Esau his brother, who had threatened to slay him. Coming to a certain place he had tarried all night because the sun was set. There, *in the open, with stones for his pillow*, he had lain down to sleep. While he slept he dreamed of a ladder set up on earth, reaching to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending it. He heard the voice of the Lord, the God of Abraham and Isaac, confirm-

ing to him the promises made to his fathers. Awakening from his sleep he said, "Surely *the LORD is in this place . . . this is none other than the house of God*". (Gen. 28. 10-17). God was in that place with Jacob because he was heir to the promises concerning the "land" and the "seed". There He gave Jacob the assurance, "I will not leave thee".

As "the children of the promise" and "heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 4. 28; 3. 29), we have the same assurance from the Lord. His presence is with us, not because we have some "holy" building in which to worship Him, but because we like Jacob are "heirs of the promise" (Heb. 6. 17). We are living stones, built up as a spiritual house, a people to *shew forth* His praises. When Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will build it again . . . He spake of the temple of *his body*" (John 2. 19-22). Paul says, "The temple of God is holy, which temple *ye are*" (1 Cor. 3. 17). Peter says, "As He which hath called you is holy, so *be ye* holy in all manner of conversation (in all manner of behaviour"—*Rotherham*). "Know ye not that *your body* is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price,

therefore *glorify* God in your body" (1 Cor. 6. 19, 20).

When the Apostle advises us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but to exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching (Heb. 10. 19-25), he makes no mention of the need of a building furnished in some particular way, in fact he clearly shows in his Epistle that the earthly Tabernacle, beautiful building though it may have been, was but a figure of the *true* Tabernacle, serving its purpose in the Jewish Age. As Christians we enter into the spiritual things which were foreshadowed in that earthly Tabernacle and its arrangements. God has "raised us up and seated us in the *heavenlies in Christ*" (Eph. 2. 4-6, *Rotherham*).

If we have an appreciation of such a living, vital, spiritual, relationship to our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, the hall in which we are privileged to meet together will add little, if anything, to our our blessing.

*"Father, where'er thy people meet,  
There they behold Thy mercy seat,  
Where'er they seek thee thou art found,  
And every place is hallowed ground."*

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## PROGRESSIVE TRUTH

"Science is knowledge, and the primary characteristic of knowledge is not that it is for ever changing, but that it is for ever growing. Of course, all growth implies change, so that science must continually change—like the tree which is for ever budding out in new directions—but this is only a secondary effect. The correct comparison is not with sand-castles, which change because they are continually washed away and replaced, but with a vast building which changes as one floor is built on top of another, or a new wing is built where none stood before. This building is not like a mediæval cathedral, each building after his own taste and fancy. It is an embodiment of scientific truth, and the truths of science are the same no matter who discovers them. Whatever artificers build the structure, the blue-prints have previously been drawn by Nature herself."

(*Sir James Jeans*)

That pronouncement, by one of the most

enlightened scientists of this century, might well be spiritualised and the word "doctrine" substituted for "science". After all, doctrine is the science of the things of God, and we Christians should expect that our doctrines remain established, consistent, yet ever growing, affording deeper and clearer views of Divine truth and a more accurate understanding of the Divine Plan, but unchanged in their fundamentals. The great truths of the Christian faith were first of all proclaimed by the apostles and prophets, and if we think that we hold and understand doctrines that were hidden from Paul and Peter we simply betray our own egotism and spiritual short-sightedness. What we do see is a greater superstructure built upon the doctrine, because two millenniums separate us from the apostles and prophets and there has been much development. The foundations remain, just as they were set by those faithful "fathers in God" of olden time.

The chief lesson and study in divinity is well and rightly to learn to know Christ . . . and Christ himself also teacheth that we

should learn to know him only out of the Scriptures where He saith, "Search the Scriptures, for they do testify of me." *Luther*

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**BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES**
**EXODUS**
**Part 11 Song of Victory Ezod. 15. 1—21**


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The dawn of Israel's first day of freedom came up beyond the high mountains of Sinai in glory and grandeur well fitting Israel's mood of exultation. The Lord had delivered as He had promised; they were witnesses to the truth of Moses' words "*The Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever.*" Six miles of sea lay between them and the land of their bondage; now they were slaves no longer, they were free men. It is little wonder they prefaced the commencement of their journey to the Promised Land with a session of praise and thanksgiving to God for this mighty deliverance. The scene on the stony plain alongside the blue waters of the Red Sea that day must have been one of unalloyed jubilation and lightness of heart.

From the practical point of view the people were still within reach of their enemies. The Egyptian authorities could easily have sent a pursuing force into the wilderness round the northern end of the present Bitter Lakes—at Etham—and advance along the eastern side of the sea to the place where Israel was assembled. In so doing they would only be following the customary route to their copper mines at Serabit and a force of cavalry could easily overtake the slow moving host before they had got very far into Sinai. But this time Pharaoh really had had enough. No further move was made by him and henceforth Moses was free to lead the people where he would. It is probable that Pharaoh did not find out what had happened until a long time afterwards. The narrative plainly states that "not one escaped" and the disaster occurred in a practically uninhabited district so there were no eyewitnesses to take the grim tidings back. Most of the Egyptians were engulfed in the quicksands by the returning waters and never seen again: some bodies were cast up on the eastern shore in the sight of Israel but that was the only visible evidence and they would have been picked clean by the vultures. The journey back to Rameses, Pharaoh's capital, would have taken a week and until that time had elapsed the monarch would not have expected news. When at last the non-appearance of his principal cavalry and chariot forces began to cause apprehension and messengers were sent to investigate, another couple of weeks must have elapsed before their return.

The only report they could make was that the whole force had totally vanished without trace. The loss of his best military personnel in such circumstances must have finally persuaded Pharaoh that the case was hopeless; he could not fight against Israel's God and expect to prevail.

There is a common impression that Pharaoh himself was drowned in the Red Sea but this is erroneous. Nothing in the historical narratives lends any support to the idea; we read of Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen and chosen captains, but never of Pharaoh himself. In only one Scripture reference, Psa. 136; 15, is there apparent foundation for the belief: "*To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts . . . and made Israel to pass through the midst of it . . . but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea.*" This Psalm was a musical composition intended for singing in the Temple services at a later time in Israel's history and is poetic. The word rendered "overthrew" in the A.V. has the significance of shaking off and should have been translated "shook off", as indeed it is so rendered by Fenton, the R.V. and the Variorum. Other uses of the same word are met with in Neh. 5.13 where Nehemiah "shook his lap" to indicate how God would shake out the apostates from His house, in Job 38.13 where the wicked are "shaken out of the earth" and Judges 16.20 where Samson purposed to "shake himself free" of his bonds. The meaning in the Psalm is that at the Red Sea God "shook off" His enemies, Pharaoh and his hosts, that from this time He was, as it were, entirely free of them and there need be no further action against them.

Pharaoh, away in his palace at Rameses, was "shaken off" just as effectively as were his unhappy servants struggling hopelessly in the returning waters. In fact Amen-hotep II lived for nineteen years after the Exodus and was then buried in the Valley of the Kings where his tomb was discovered in 1898 with the body safely inside its funeral coffer. It lies there still, preserved with many of his fellow Pharaohs under the unremitting care of the Egyptian Department of Antiquities. A "*ushabti*" figure, a likeness, of Amen-hotep II, skilfully sculptured in serpentine stone, is in one of the Egyptian Rooms of the British Museum; contemplation of the handsome

self-confident but arrogant and ruthless features affords convincing testimony to the accuracy of the Biblical description of this man, coming down to us from more than three thousand years ago.

It is certain that Moses organised something like a thanksgiving session for Israel there on the shore of the Red Sea before giving the word to march. The "song" which chapter 15 says was sung unto the Lord by "Moses and the children of Israel" indicates as much. It was obviously composed for the occasion and probably performed to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The first part of the song, vss 1-12 is retrospective, exulting over the fate of the Egyptians and the wonder of the deliverance; the second part, vss 13-18, is prospective, looking forward to the anticipated triumphs of the Israelites as they pushed on their way to the Promised Land. At the end of the song it is related (vss 20-21) that Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, led the women of Israel in a triumphal dance with the timbrels and a refrain "*Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously*". It is quite likely that this refrain was in the nature of an answering chorus interjected repeatedly at the end of each stanza or section of the song. At any rate this is the first occasion of song and dance in worship recorded in the Bible. Song has remained in religious worship ever since, down to the employment of hymns and psalms in current Christian worship, but the dance as an element of devotional worship has not survived. Considering that Miriam upon the occasion in question was well over ninety years of age her leadership of the dance was, by modern standards, quite an achievement. This incident is only one of many in the narratives of the time going to shew that human vitality in those days stood at a much higher level than now.

The song first of all praises and exalts God who gave this great victory. "*The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation . . . . The Lord is a man of war*" He is the God of battles, the defender of His people. From this the emphasis shifts to the wonder of the event. "*Pharaoh's chariots and his hosts hath he cast into the sea . . . .*" They are drowned, sinking into the bottom like a stone. It was the Lord's right hand which was manifested in glory and power, and executed the great work. This allusion to the Lord's right hand is another significant factor. Throughout the story of the Plagues and the Exodus it is the "right hand" of the Eternal that is both manifest in glory and

judgment and powerful to execute the decrees of the Eternal. From this elementary conception of the right hand as the instrument of power the prophets of Israel in after years began to bring in the idea of a projected personality, being of God and not to be thought of separate from God, nevertheless representing God in the world of men and exercising God's power in the world of men without it being thought necessary for the Eternal personally to abdicate His throne in the heavens for the purpose. So the Psalmist in one of the most noble of the Messianic psalms (110) can say "*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool*". In the physical creation, Isaiah says that it was the right hand of the Lord which spanned (spread out) the heavens. At a somewhat later date the Wise Man, compiler of the Proverbs (chapter 8) associated this outwardly perceptible manifestation of Divine power with Divine wisdom, the mind of God, personified and depicted as a skilled workman or architect giving concrete reality to the creative designs of God. "*I was by him, as a skilled workman; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.*" From this the Jewish doctrine of the Logos, the Word of God which was of God, coming to the world of men from God, bearing the revelation of God, was born. The Apostle John crowned this developing understanding of the manner in which God is revealed to His creatures by saying "*And the Word*" — the Logos — "*was made flesh, and we beheld his glory*". (Jno 1:14). When Moses, on the shore of the Red Sea those many thousands of years ago, sang of the right hand of the Lord manifesting Himself in glory and power for the execution of the Divine mandate, he sang of the same Power which afterwards appeared in the sight of men in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and will yet appear again in a hitherto unknown and unimaginable spiritual glory for the deliverance of the whole world from a greater enemy by far than Egypt ever was to Israel.

"*With the blast of thy nostrils*" sang Moses, "*the depths were congealed*" — a word meaning hardened — "*in the heart of the sea*". These are the words of an eye-witness; who else could so eloquently have described first that powerful east wind heaping up the waters and then the hardening of that sandy sea bed as the waters left it so that the host could pass over? "*Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters*". The physical facts of

the story demand that a sudden change to a westerly wind intensified the force of the returning waters but the actual narrative does not record this; here in the song we have a plain statement — again from the eye-witness — of the fact.

Here the retrospective section of the song comes to an end with another ascription of praise to God. "*Who is like unto thee, O God, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*" Now Moses looks into the future and he sees God leading the people He has delivered until He brings them safely to their Promised Land. The nations inhabiting the land will be stricken with fear; the inhabitants of Palestine (the Greek form of Philistia, the land of the Philistines), the dukes of Edom, the mighty men of Moab; fear and dread shall fall upon them and they all shall melt away. The rosy optimism of Moses was not destined to be justified. The faith and fortitude of Israel proved quite unequal to the task and in the upshot they had to fight many fierce and sanguinary battles with the stalwart defenders of Canaan before the Promised Land finally became theirs. But that was their own fault. They chose the way of war. Had they maintained genuine faith in God and followed His instructions they would have inherited the land without warfare and the tribes of Canaan would have vanished away by natural decrease, "*by little and little*" (Exod: 23.30) until Israel was left in sole possession. Let those who would lay the blame for the savagery of the conquest of Canaan at the door of God reflect that the responsibility is not His, but Israel's. They repudiated His guidance and attempted to storm the Land of Promise in their own strength and by their own power, and they suffered grievously in the process.

But Moses, at this time, knew nothing of this. In the exultation of the moment he, and all Israel with him, looked forward to a triumphal progress through the desert and a glorious entry to the land the Lord had promised them, and once in that land, an end to all their troubles. "*Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in*". They were sincere enough, at that moment, and they really believed it was going to be as simple as that. Nothing was farther from their thoughts, then that within three days they would have forgotten their joyful anticipation and be in a state of rebellion against the leader who was

to take them into the Promised Land. But that was still three days away; the day of praise which now was theirs came to a close with the sublime epilogue which ended the song because after that epilogue was uttered there was nothing more that could be said; "*The Eternal shall reign for ever and ever*". Verse 19 is not part of the song. It is a word of explanation possibly added by some later editor to relate the song to the event which inspired it. It is probable that in after days the song existed as a separate literary work, perhaps set out in suitable form for the Temple services at Jerusalem, and that this remark in vs. 19 was appended to the "score". It merely repeats in brief what chapter 14 has already recorded in full.

The Apostle Paul uses this great happening, the crossing of the Red Sea, to illustrate the Christian doctrine of baptism. The people of Israel, he says in 1 Cor. 10, were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They were overshadowed by the cloud and they passed through the sea, and in this experience they were metaphorically made dead to the old life in Egypt and made alive to the new life which awaited them in the Promised Land. In a sense they died and were resurrected—died to Egypt and lived to God, for the next stage in their experience was the making of a covenant at Sinai by which they became the dedicated people of God. This constitutes a picture, a representation of Christian baptism. The Apostle in Romans 6 expounds the principle in very similar words. "*We are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*". Immersion in water is the symbol of the true baptism; as the believer goes down into the water he is symbolically dead and buried, dead to this world and all in it that is not of God. As he comes up out of the water he is symbolically resurrected to a new and eternal life, a life lived in association with Christ, "*Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (2 Cor. 5.17). Israel going down into the sea and coming up again on the other side, likened by the Apostle to a "baptism into Moses", thus becomes a very vivid picture of the Christian's baptism into Christ.

A link between the Red Sea crossing and the events which are to signal a much greater deliverance of all mankind, at the end of this Age and the inauguration of the Messianic kingdom, is afforded by an allusion in the vision of Isaiah. In the course of the ecstatic

word picture in which the prophet saw the transfer of sovereignty from the kingdoms of this world to the kingdom of God, and the part played by modern restored Israel in that transfer, he says (Isa. 11.15) "*and the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river . . . and make men go over dryshod*". This is associated with the promise (ch. 11.11) that "*the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people . . . and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four quarters of*

*the earth*". The glory of that celebrated episode in Israel's history, undimmed still in the days of Isaiah seven centuries later, gave the golden tongued prophet inspiration for an eloquent simile of the Last Days. When the Lord "sets His hand the second time" to effect a great deliverance in the world of men, the glory and the majesty of that deliverance will be as it was on the day so long ago when the Lord sent a strong east wind, and the waters of the sea parted, and Israel went across, out of the kingdom of darkness into the place of the sanctuary of God.

(To be continued)

### THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

It was at Nazareth that Jesus first preached. His message embraced three points which are still true. *One*: to preach good tidings. Always characteristic of the Christian faith but often overlaid with theology. Jesus' message related to His coming earthly Kingdom when He recovers all from the grave and offers them full and final opportunity to take their rightful place in God's creation. *Two*: to comfort the distressed and free the captives. Christianity is a practical faith and the Christian is obligated to do good unto all according to opportunity. The method and sphere by and in which he does so varies with individuals but the obligation is there. It is thus that Christians are the "salt of the earth." *Three*: to invite us to identify ourselves with him in full surrender of life, abilities and possessions to his service. It is only in Christ that there is any hope for men, individually or collectively; only by personal acceptance of all that He did, and does, and stands for, that we become acceptable to God; therefore the greatest and most important aspect of his message is that which is expressed in the words "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*"

Our life is like the dial of a clock. The hands are God's hands passing over and over again—the short hand, the Hand of Discipline; the long hand, the Hand of Mercy. Slowly and surely the Hand of Discipline must pass and God speaks at each stroke; but over and over passes the Hand of Mercy, showering down sixtyfold of blessing for each stroke of discipline and trial; and both hands are fastened to one secure point, the heart of God.

### POSITIVE FAITH

Let us have a positive and confident faith in our privilege of calling upon the Lord for "grace to help in every time of need". Erasmus, when confronted by Luther with the scornful assertion that "you desire to tread upon eggs without crushing them, and among glasses without breaking them", replied cautiously "I will not be unfaithful to the cause of Christ, *at least so far as the Age will permit me*". Compare with that the faith which enabled Paul, braving the terrors and stormy seas and unknown lands, the bitter opposition of the Jewish leaders and the relentless intolerance of false brethren, to exclaim triumphantly "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." If we look down into the stormy waters upon which we are treading we can do naught else but sink, but if with quiet confidence we look up to the stars and remember that away in the heavens are the things that endure, we shall forget the threatening gulf below us: and the great waters which mount up to the heavens will serve but to bring us nearer to God, for we shall be riding always upon the crest of the wave.

Are you a fruit-bearer in your Lord's vineyard? Are you seeking to make life one grand act of consecration to His glory? It is often those fruits that are unseen and unknown to man, ripening in seclusion, that He values most; the quiet, lowly walk, the humble mind, the willing heart, the unselfish spirit, the unostentatious kindness—these are some of the 'fruits' which your heavenly Father loves, and by which He is glorified.



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

Vol. 41, No. 7

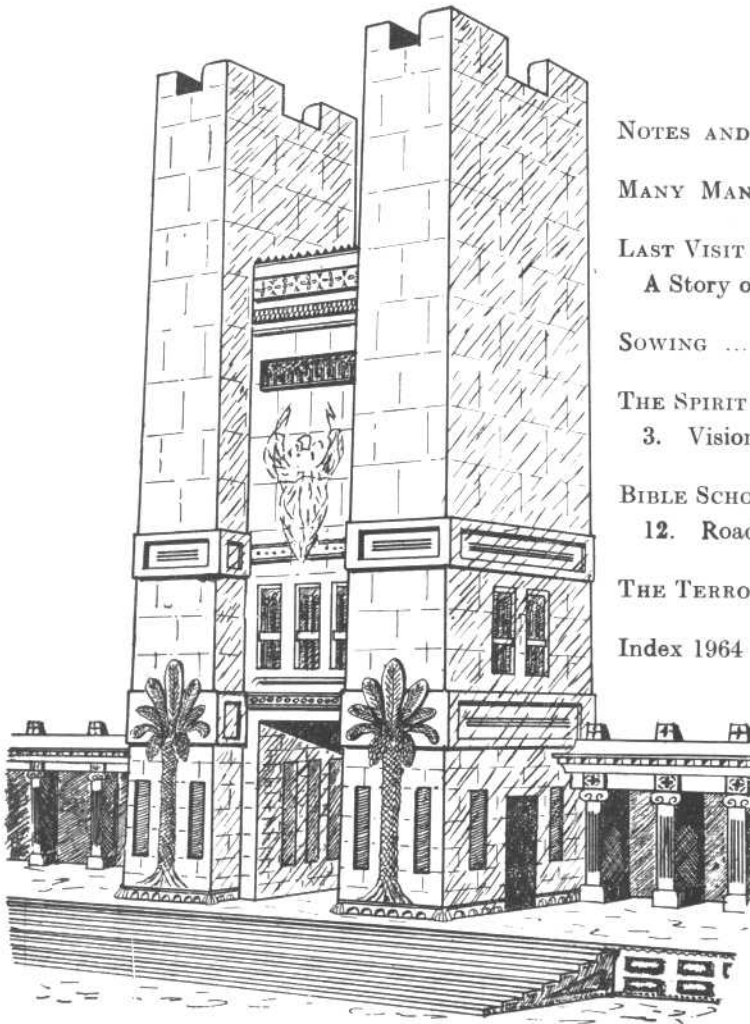
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

### Notes and Notices

It is usual at this time of the year to mention, for the benefit of those who are interested, the special fund administered by Bro. E. Allbon and to say that contributions will be warmly appreciated and acknowledged if sent to Mr. E. Allbon, 9 Esher Close, Nyetimber Lane, Pagham, Bognor Regis, Sussex. Details of known cases of need should also be sent to Bro. Allbon.

\* \* \*

Will readers in the United States and Canada who send gifts to the "Monthly" by means of Post Office International Money Orders please note that usually the Post Office in passing us the money give the name of the sender but not the address. In consequence we sometimes have difficulty in identifying the sender and are unable to acknowledge the gift. May we ask that anyone on the North American continent paying in money to their Post Office for transmission to us also advise us separately by letter that they have done so, in order that we may be in no doubt as to the identity of the sender.

\* \* \*

Opportunity is taken in these columns to acknowledge a donation of five dollars from J\*\*\* D\*\* postmarked Grand Rapids. With no other clue to our friend's identity we must express our appreciation by this means.

\* \* \*

Baptism is one of the distinctive features of the Christian faith and a right understanding of the subject is important. All too often it is considered only as a sign of acceptance into one or another Christian denomination and the fundamental reason for its existence as a ceremony overlooked. Two recent articles in

the "Monthly", "Baptism in the New Testament" and "To fulfil all righteousness" have been reprinted as a 32-page booklet under the title "The Christian Doctrine of Baptism" and this booklet is now available at 1/6 post free and will be sent by return on receipt of P.O. or stamps. (5 copies for one dollar to U.S.A. or Canada).

\* \* \*

A new illustrated 8-page edition of the well-known leaflet "The Bible—the Book for Today" is now available for general witness and evangelical work, at 10 copies for 1/6 or 100 copies for 12/6, both post free (for U.S.A. or Canada 50 copies for one dollar).

\* \* \*

Booklets still available are as follows:—

*The Tragedy of Samson* 52 pp. A character study of the Israelitish hero. 1/6 post free.

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#### Gone from us

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 Sis. E. Blackhall (Lanark)  
 Sis. D. J. Hall (Newcastle)  
 Sis. V. Kirkwood (Glasgow)  
 Sis. A. M. Lardent (Birkenhead)  
 Sis. K. S. Walton (Coventry)

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"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away"

---

## MANY MANSIONS

*A looking forward*

*"In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you" (Jno. 14. 2).*

If there are so many mansions in the Father's house, why did our Lord find it necessary to go away and prepare a place for His disciples, that where He is, there we may be also? Were none of these mansions good enough?

In God's creation there are many homes suitable for living beings, many stations of existence, both spiritual and material. Look up into the starry heavens; behold the magnificent array of stars, some of them attended by planets like our own. Here in this great universe there are untold myriads of possible abiding places for living creatures. Sir James Jeans, speaking before the Royal Institution in November, 1942, and giving the very latest considered conclusions of astronomers on this subject, said *"the chance of a star, in a nebulous state, having given birth to planets before attaining to the sun state is considerable. A fair proportion of the stars must then, be accompanied by planets. Of these a substantial fraction are likely to be in a physical state not very different from that of our own earth, and so capable of maintaining life like our terrestrial life; it is possible that such life is far more abundant in space than we used to think"*. Bible students may not agree readily to the last sentence; it is more likely that these other planets are being prepared for future races of men made in God's likeness, when the drama of sin and death has been enacted once for all upon this earth. But it does seem that many "mansions" in the skies, existing from of old, "or ever the earth was", have been and are being prepared for the further purposes of God. Nevertheless, none of these terrestrial mansions can ever be a fitting home for the glorified Christ company. Made like unto their Lord, clothed upon with spiritual bodies even as He, possessed of powers and attributes far above the human, there must of necessity be, somewhere, a home prepared for them which is of like quality.

What, then, of the spiritual world, of which our visible universe is but a material counterpart? Long before the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters and commanded light to be; long before the particles of which sun, and moon, and stars are made, had begun

to come together, God Most High reigned upon the throne of His holiness. The Son, the *Logos*, rejoiced "always before Him" (Prov. 8. 30), and ten thousand times ten thousand glorious celestial beings lived their lives and carried out their varied occupations and vocations in sinless purity before Him. That world of theirs, impossible for our human brains to imagine or visualise, must have a more glorious counterpart to everything that gives us pleasure or sustains life here on earth. Those angels do always behold the face of the Father (Matt. 18. 10). Could it not be, then, that among those heavenly hosts and in the order of things in which they live, and move, and have their being, there may be found that superbly glorious home to which the King will lead His Bride when the day of union shall have come?

All these planes of being, with their varied homes and worlds, belong to the Old Creation—that creation which commenced when the Most High, in the solitude and silence before Time began, through His Son created the spiritual world, and varied forms of spiritual beings to fill that world, then brought into existence a material universe, making man in His own mental and moral image and likeness, in form of flesh adapted to the earth upon which he was to live. All this constitutes the Old Creation, the First Creation, the one brought into existence by God through the instrumentality of His beloved Son, *"by whom also He made the worlds"*.

This creation, with all its mansions, is, or will be when sin is banished, complete in itself. The New Testament speaks of the subsequent coming into existence of a New Creation—something the like of which has never been seen or known before, either upon earth or in heaven. Spiritual beings—yes, but on a higher plane than spiritual beings have ever been constituted before. The Divine Son is the Head of this New Creation. His followers who are called to follow in His steps are promised that, if faithful, they too shall share in the glories of that New Creation, if they have become dead in Christ and have been buried with Him in His baptism and have risen again to walk in newness of life with Him. They are not yet clothed upon with the "body", the outward organism in which the new spiritual life and identity finds itself at home, and

through which it can be manifested in its own surroundings and to its fellows, but, nevertheless, they are a "New Creation". *"If any man be in Christ, there is a New Creation. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Cor. 5. 17).

So it is not surprising that this New Creation, endowed with immortality, the gift of God, should need a new kind of home of a nature that the Old Creation had never needed and never seen. Yes, many mansions there have been in the Father's house, but none just suitable for immortal beings. The Bridegroom must needs go away and prepare a place exceeding the most glorious spiritual condition previously known, just as the spiritual we do know exceeds in glory the earthly.

If this be so, what joy must fill the heart of the Heavenly Bridegroom as He comes to call his Bride to her new home. With what deep satisfaction must He then contemplate the imminence of the day when He shall *"see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied"* (Isa. 53. 11). The new home ready; angels in heaven eager to witness the great event; the Heavenly Father awaiting the presentation of the Bride before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; what wonder that it is said that the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, and that His beloved shall be "caught up" to meet Him in the air, so to be ever with Him. Who knows the wonders of that marriage feast, when the wisdom of all the ages, and deepest confidence respecting the work of the future, shall be imparted to those to whom it is given to sit around that festal board.

Here it is that the picture of the Bride must merge into that of the anointed and glorified Christ company. From that wedding feast these will come forth, radiant souls possessed by an all-embracing and overpowering love for their Lord and their Leader, the Head of their house. That home is to be their headquarters, their homeland, from which they will go forth to carry out the wonderful works which are to be their portion to all eternity.

The wedding feast is limited in time. The world of men will be passing through the severest phase of the world's final trouble while those wonderful scenes are being enacted in heaven. The Church will have gone from earth; all will have been taken to be with their Lord, to be presented to the Father,

When Jesus said "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida" in His denunciation of the unbelieving cities in Matt. 11. 20-24, He used the Greek word *ouai* which means

to become accustomed to their new environment and their new powers, and to receive their final instruction for their first great work, the Millennial conversion of men upon earth. But they may not linger around the festal board, for the cry of sinsick humanity resounds to the heavens, and the whole creation, groaning and travailling in pain together, *"waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God"* (Rom. 8. 19-22).

So the cavalcade sets out. The Lord who had come to earth for His saints, and taken them to Himself, now comes to the world with His saints, and there is no man who knows it not. We do not know, we cannot say, what coming and going there may be between that place which is our home, prepared for that purpose by our Lord, and this place which for a thousand years is the scene of our labours. It "doth not yet appear what we shall be", and our deepest thinking can only furnish us with a shadow of the reality.

Perhaps, though, we can visualise, dimly, at the end of the thousand years, another great gathering in the spacious halls of that "prepared place". The work with mankind is over. Evil has spread its wings and flown far away; never again will its shadow darken God's fair realm. Sin is no more; all the earth is at rest, it breaks forth into singing. Listening angels have heard the sublime words, echoing from high Heaven: *"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"*. The cherubim which for long ages have stood on guard with the flaming sword, keeping the way of the Tree of Life, now wing their flight back to the Throne of God, their long vigil over. The sons of God who wondered, and shouted for joy, when the foundations of the earth were laid (Job 38. 7) are shouting again for joy to behold this triumphant conclusion to the eternal purpose of God. And away up in that highest home of all the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church commune together. The further plans of God are spread out to view; works of creation mighty beyond imagination, designs for the enrichment of God's glory and superabundant happiness for creatures yet to be born, happy service and unceasing joy in each other's fellowship and in the presence and companionship of our glorious Lord, age after age without end, to all eternity.

"Alas". It was an expression of pity and not of condemnation. He "reproached" those cities. Men reproach those whom they love and of whom they had expected better things.

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**LAST VISIT TO JERUSALEM**

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No. 14 in a series of  
stories of St. Paul

The tall, scholarly looking man looked up from his writing as a shadow darkened his doorway. His momentary expression of incredulity gave place to manifest pleasure; he rose from his chair and went forward to grasp the hand of his visitor. The last thing Luke the physician expected was to see his close friend, Paul, walking into his house here at Philippi. It is easy to visualise the unfeigned delight with which he drew the newcomer to a seat, called for a meal to be prepared, and began to enquire into the progress of his work at Ephesus and the reason for Paul's unexpected appearance so far from the scene of his labours.

Something like six years had elapsed since last these two men met. Upon the establishment of the church at Philippi during the course of Paul's second missionary journey Luke had remained there to nurture the infant community while Paul went on to Berea, Athens, Corinth and eventually home to Antioch. They had probably kept in touch; casual travellers would have carried letters and news, but such opportunities were few and far between so that in great measure Luke had been left to his own resources in the discharge of his obligations. How well he had succeeded was evidenced by the healthy state of the Philippian church. The two old comrades-in-arms must have sat up late that night satisfying each other's excited queries, the one asking after affairs in Philippi and the other seeking information about the many places Paul had visited since they parted six years earlier.

After the riot in the Ephesus stadium which precipitated the end of Paul's work there and his rather hurried departure from the city he took the road to Troas, the seaport for ships going to Greece, with the evident intention of visiting the churches he had established there during his second missionary journey. It was at Troas, six years earlier, that he saw in a dream the man of Macedonia calling him to come over and help them; those churches in Greece were the fruits of that call. Now he was in Troas again, doubtless in fellowship with the believers, waiting there for the return of Titus, who a little while previously had been despatched to Corinth bearing the letter known to us as the First Epistle to the Corinthians. From Paul's words in 2 Cor. 2.

12-13 it seems that Paul was getting worried about the failure of Titus to meet him in Troas as expected. The Epistle had been sent to correct certain abuses which had crept into the Corinthian church and it is only natural to surmise that this period of waiting, loaded with uncertainty, following his recent harrowing experience at Ephesus, had thrown the usually confident Apostle into a mood of deep depression. It seems that at last he could stand the inactivity no longer, and deciding that Titus was not coming to meet him at all he took ship for Macedonia and made his way to Philippi where he could be certain of finding his old friend, Luke.

It was here that Titus did join him eventually. The news was partly good and partly bad. The brethren at Corinth had taken his letter of reproof and admonition (the First Epistle) in the right spirit and had taken steps to correct the abuses in their assembly. On the other hand, there had been other visitors to Corinth casting doubt upon the validity of Paul's apostleship and upon his personal integrity, and a section in the church had accepted these accusations as true and were repudiating his mission and his message. The upshot of this was the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, which was written probably at Philippi and sent to Corinth by the hand of the ever willing Titus. Paul himself determined to delay his own visit to Corinth for a while longer to give his letter an opportunity of having its full effect upon the Corinthian brethren.

As if the shortcomings of Corinth were not enough, the Apostle now encountered trouble from another quarter. News came to the effect that the churches in Galatia were being influenced by teachers who claimed that Christians must be subject to the Laws of Moses. This "Judaising" tendency was a constant problem in the early Christian communities and several generations passed before it was finally settled. Fully alive to the situation, Paul lost no time in preparing and sending to his Galatian converts a complete refutation of this doctrine, this "yoke of bondage", as he described it; thus did the Epistle to the Galatians come into being.

In addition to these literary activities, written in the house of Luke at Philippi, the Apostle found time for a brief tour through

Macedonia, revisiting Thessalonica and Berea, and pushing further westward than he had done before, into the district of Illyricum on the coast of the Adriatic Sea. On the other side of that sea lay Italy, and in Italy was Rome. Whilst he was still in Ephesus he had determined within himself that after this tour through Greece, and one more visit to Jerusalem, he must go to Rome (Acts 19. 21). Now as he gazed across the heaving waters of the Adriatic he pictured beyond the distant mountains that proud city which had become the capital and centre of the Empire, and told himself that he must certainly visit the Christian community which already existed there and proclaim the truths of the Gospel with no uncertain voice in the city of Cæsar itself. With these thoughts in mind he finally made his way to Corinth.

Paul stayed in Corinth for three months. Three momentous months they proved to be, for during this time the Epistle to the Romans was written. First of all he had to undo the work of the false apostles who had been busy in Corinth, and set things in order in the church. Secondly there was the question of the money gift for the brethren at Jerusalem. Throughout Greece the Christian communities had been working on this proposal; news had come their way of the desperate straits of poverty to which the Jerusalem church had been reduced, partly because of famine and partly the disturbed political state of the country. Judea was already entering into that era of active rebellion against Rome which came to a head ten years later when the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem and expelled the Jews from the land. Paul had made himself responsible for seeing that the gift was safely taken to its intended recipients, and already he had, travelling with him as joint custodians, Jason and Aristarchus of Thessalonica, Sosipator of Berea, Gaius of Derbe, together with Timothy, Trophimus and Tychicus, all of Ephesus, and his close friends Luke and Titus. It had been a lonely journey up to this point, but now he was with a goodly company of stalwart warriors of the Lord and his heart must have rejoiced. It was in that exultation of spirit and relative freedom from stress that the Apostle Paul sat down to write what is universally acclaimed the greatest of his written works, the Epistle to the Romans.

Paul was no stranger to the Roman fellowship. Although he had not as yet visited Rome, many of the Christians living there were personally known to him. Aquila and

Priscilla, whom he first met at Corinth and afterwards worked with at Ephesus, were now back in the capital. The decree of Claudius, expelling all Jews from Rome, was never rigorously applied by the authorities, and by now, fourteen years after its promulgation, had become a dead letter. So Aquila and Priscilla had gone back. Epenetus, the first convert in Greece, and Andronicus and Junia who worked with Paul at Ephesus, were also in Rome. So were a number of others whom the Apostle had met or with whom he had laboured at various times, and at the end of the Epistle he makes special mention of them all, revealing his intention, not mentioned in any other record of his work, of one day journeying not only to Rome but onward into Spain, the western extremity, as Judea and the adjacent lands were the eastern extremity, of the Roman empire. So the epistle was finished, and Phoebe, the deaconess of Cenchrea, who had been converted when Paul first came to Corinth, was entrusted with the task of making the long journey to Rome to convey it into the hands of the Christians in the great city. There must have been considerable excitement among the brethren there when the letter arrived, and at the prospect of a visit from the famous Apostle. There was as yet no persecution of Christians in Rome. The Emperor Nero had been on the throne for four years but had not yet developed those characteristics which bore such terrible fruit a few years later. The church in Rome included Romans as well as Jews, highly born as well as slaves, and all were able to follow their faith without let or hindrance. So the Apostle was able to discourse to them without necessity or thought for exhorting to steadfastness under persecution as the writers frequently do in some other New Testament books. This three months at Corinth was a quiet interlude in the Apostle's stormy life, an interlude which he used to good purpose in writing the most celebrated of all his epistles. The interlude was all too short; three months was as long as the orthodox Jews of Corinth could stand before making plans to do him a mischief. It had apparently become known that he intended to take ship direct to Syria, en route to Jerusalem with the money gift that had been collected, and the Jews plotted to waylay him as he set sail. Taking evasive action by a change of route, Paul and his party travelled overland into Macedonia instead, doubtless calling at Philippi on the way, and sailed across the sea to Troas on the

Asiatic coast, from which port he had come to Greece. To all intents and purposes this concluded the third missionary journey; from now onward he was making his way to Jerusalem to hand over the gift.

The brethren at Troas were not going to let him go easily. The Apostle spent a week in the city and while he was there the incident of Eutychus occurred. The believers had come together on the first day of the week to break bread; Paul was present with them and was to preach. The story is of value as showing that at this early date, only twenty five years after the Crucifixion, the adoption of the first day of the week as the day of gathering for worship, instead of the seventh, the Jewish Sabbath, had become established. It was to be another three centuries before the Emperor Constantine legalised Sunday as the weekly day of rest and worship throughout the Empire. The reference to breaking of bread is often taken as indicating a celebration of the Last Supper, or "Holy Communion", but this is open to question. There is no indication in the New Testament as to how frequently the early Church obeyed our Lord's injunction "this do, as oft as ye do it, in remembrance of me". It is perhaps more likely that this occasion at Troas was the weekly "agape" or love feast, mentioned several times in the Book of Acts, the simple communal meal which was held at frequent intervals in the life of each local Church to express in symbol and practice their joint fellowship in Christ. At any rate, the centre of attention was the Apostle Paul; he continued his preaching until midnight and apparently was showing no sign of finishing even then. His hearers were not tired of listening and gave him their undivided and rapt attention; all, that is, save one young man, Eutychus.

Eutychus was sleepy. The weakness of the flesh had overcome the eagerness of the spirit. He might well have been a slave who had performed an arduous day's work before coming to the service. The meeting was being held on the third floor of the building and Eutychus had seated himself in one of the window embrasures which were just plain openings admitting light and air—perhaps in the hope that the cool night breeze would keep him awake. But "Paul was long preaching" and "there were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together". Despite his best endeavours, Eutychus began to nod. The voice of the speaker went on and on, impinging dully on his con-

sciousness, but all the time Nature was demanding, and receiving, the blessed relief of sleep. The account is so realistic that one might think that St. Luke, who was there and recorded it, was himself looking apprehensively toward Eutychus at the time but was not near enough to prevent the mishap. The lad was at first "fallen into a deep sleep" but as the sermon went on "he sunk down with sleep and fell from the third loft, and was taken up dead". One can picture the cry of alarm which suddenly interrupted the meeting and the rush of some downstairs to the inert body lying in the courtyard, and then perhaps the anxious faces as Luke, the physician, knelt by the unfortunate lad to ascertain the extent of his injuries.

There is a certain amount of doubt as to whether Eutychus was actually dead or merely rendered unconscious by the fall, a doubt which is due to the remark attributed to Paul himself, who came down, embraced the still form, and said "Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him". Later on "they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted". Against this hypothesis there must be considered several factors. In the first place, a fall of this nature, even if it did not result in death must have involved serious physical injuries—at the least broken bones. Secondly, with Luke present it is most unlikely that Paul would take it upon himself to give what amounts to a medical opinion; by common consent the examination of Eutychus would have been left to Luke, and he says that he was "taken up dead". A layman might have been mistaken but not so likely a professional medical man. It seems more probable that we have here one of the very few examples of Divine intervention following the end of Jesus' life on earth and that Eutychus was literally dead and was restored to life. The action of Paul in "embracing" the body is reminiscent of Elijah and of Elisha in Old Testament days; both those prophets raised from the dead, one the widow's son, the other the Shunamite's child, in a similar fashion. In the New Testament a detailed account of the restoration of Tabitha to life by Peter shortly after death had taken place is given, so that Paul here might well have done what his brother Apostle had done a few years previously. Such an exercise of miraculous power would, of course, include the healing of such physical injuries as might have been sustained; thus Eutychus could be brought back into the meeting shortly afterwards as implied by the account.

Paul continued his discourse until break of day, so that the gathering must have been in session for almost twenty-four hours. That accounts for what appears to be a second breaking of bread in Chapter 20, 11 in the small hours of the second day of the week. They probably needed it. This was most likely a more substantial meal during which the Apostle talked in a more informal fashion; that seems to be the implication of verse 11. Then he took his leave of the brethren at Troas and set out on the last lap of his journey to Jerusalem.

The ship on which the little party of evangelists had secured a passage was evidently one of the small trading vessels which coasted along the shore, calling at each port in turn, remaining a while to discharge and take on cargo, and 'if night was imminent waiting until next morning before resuming the voyage. A few days sailing brought them to Miletus, which was the port for Ephesus, distant from the city about forty miles. The vessel was evidently scheduled to stay here for several days, long enough for Paul to summon the elders of the church to meet him at Miletus for a brief conference before the ship departed. It was a memorable meeting; the Apostle reminded them of the ministry and teaching he had so freely given them over the space of three years and exhorted them to prove true to their calling and their obligations as elders in the church. He warned them that "grievous wolves" would enter among them and wreak havoc with the "flock", men speaking perverse things and drawing away disciples after them. "*I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God*" he said, striking sadness into their hearts by telling them "*I know that ye all, among whom*

*I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more*". It is apparent that at this time Paul did not expect ever to return to Ephesus; he felt that the unrelenting enmity of his Jewish opponents was bringing him steadily nearer to the day that he would fall victim to their machinations. He had just told these very elders "*And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me*". In fact, however, there is not much doubt that the Apostle was mistaken in thinking he would never see Ephesus again. It is virtually certain that after his acquittal at the first trial before Nero he did revisit Ephesus and work there for a while; it is very possible that his second arrest, which resulted in his second and third trials at Rome and his martyrdom, was at Ephesus. But at this moment Paul had no clear foreview of the future and probably no plans. He only knew that he must go to Jerusalem; after that all was in the hands of his Lord.

So at length, after changing ships at Patara in Lycia, and again at Tyre in Phoenicia, Paul and his companions arrived at Cæsarea, the nearest seaport to Jerusalem. There they entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, to spend a few days in quietude and rest before going up to meet the Jerusalem church.

There was to be no more quietude and rest for the Apostle after this. Within a few days he was to be Paul the prisoner, and more than four years were to pass before he was again to know freedom.

(To be continued)

Christians have a joy of spirit, of which no earthly experience can rob them, and their joys increase daily, yearly, as they ripen in Christian experience, and as they grow in knowledge and in grace. Theirs is a privilege of access to the Throne of Heavenly Grace, and a privilege of communion with the Heavenly Father and with their Lord Jesus Christ. They may rejoice in the privilege of being God's ambassadors, and of telling the Good Tidings to others, thus to "show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. Oh, great are the privileges and mercies and blessing of these Spiritual Israelites, far more than compensating for their discipline, tribulations and oppositions!

Soberly, thoughtfully, we are to weigh and endeavour to realise the import of the exceeding great and precious promises and to gather from them their invigorating inspiration; earnestly we must apply our minds and hearts to the instruction of the inspired Word of God, availing ourselves also of such helps—of "pastors and teachers" and their literary productions—which prove harmonious with, and helpful to, the study of the Scriptures; diligently and patiently we must submit ourselves to all the transforming influences of Divine grace and truth; and then, loyally and faithfully, we must devote our consecrated talents, however few or many, to the great work of preaching this gospel of the Kingdom to all who will hear.

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## SOWING

A word of exhortation

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*"He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."* (Eccl. 11. 4).

These words may be summed up as unnecessary caution. It describes the position of one who fears to act lest . . . ; something is holding him back; he notes the wind and postpones the sowing until a more favourable day; he beholds the clouds and defers the reaping. Several ways of applying the teaching come readily to the mind. We may think of one who knows somewhat of the purposes of God; he realises his great debt to God and Christ for the work of salvation unmerited and free. He feels that his gratitude for all should show itself in more than verbal thanks. He has come to that point which we refer to as Rom. 12. 1. He knows that the Christian way is no easy road; and he hesitates. Observing the winds, he fails to sow. In such a position of mind the winds may well increase and storm clouds gather. He may think within himself: "I must think this over more", but in reality he fears to "touch things which involve so much". Maybe he believes he is counting the cost; but in fact he is merely counting the debits and omitting the credits. He feels the winds and sees the gathering clouds, but has forgotten the sunshine. He is thinking of the risks, and the result of his supposed counting-the-cost is only miscalculation. (We cannot, in fact, count the cost, for much more is involved in the life of consecration than ever we supposed as we commenced the pathway. All will now agree that the cost as it works out in our lives is far different from what we supposed or expected). He is forgetting the important fact that whereas there will be storms, the providences of God are greater than the storms. God has not promised that there will be no storm or wind, but He has promised abundant blessing. Whatever he thinks within his heart, he should yield himself to God and get on with the sowing. He will meet winds he never thought of; he will receive providences he would not have dreamed of when first he knew the Lord; and he will reap more than he anticipated. We recall that to Israel God promised fruitful fields so that they could safely sow and reap. He did not promise no storm or wind, but He promised bountiful crops, and the providences of God provided

the increase.

One of our Lord's best known parables commences: "*A sower went forth to sow*". Had our Lord observed the winds He would not have scattered the seed which was to yield one hundred and forty-four thousand. No sower of the word encountered more storms than He. Had He hesitated or counted the cost we should not be where we are today. Nor did He reason in the words of His own parable that some of the seed would fall by the wayside, and some among thorns. Nor did He regard that a cloud may prevent reaping. He got on with the sowing, no storms or clouds hindering him, and God gave the increase, for some fell on good ground and yielded a hundred-fold. He believed that the onus was on him to sow. Likewise the apostle Paul. What a great loss to the Church had he been deterred by the clouds of trouble! But what a crop because he sowed in all weathers and fields!

Recall Acts 20. 21-25. Paul observed the clouds with only a passing glance. He did not deceive himself into saying there would be no clouds, for he knew that bonds and afflictions awaited him. But no storms could prevent him testifying the gospel of the grace of God. Surely he was following the advice of Eccl. 11. 6. He went on sowing; he knew not "*whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good*". He did not suppose that both might be alike bad, for he knew God would give the increase. Is it morning now? Some say so; then sow thy seed. If you think it eventide, still sow.

We might ask: Is any sowing being done now, or are the labourers regarding the winds of contrary doctrine? Or are they regarding the clouds of trouble and neglecting the reaping? We have all heard the winds of doctrine that hold the sowers back. One wind says: "*It is reaping time; do not sow*". Another says: "*It is sowing time; reaping is over*". And still another says: "*It is reaping time, and sowing is to be deferred until the ploughshare of trouble has prepared the ground afresh*". The labourer is disturbed in mind, and fails to sow. Like our Lord, like Paul, we must get on with the sowing. We do not know which will prosper, or whether both will alike be good, but we do believe that God will give the increase. And we are reaping crops

of truth due to the faithful labourers of the past. Others have laboured, and we have entered into their labours.

There is another sowing to be done—not the scattering of good news, but sowing within the hearts of ourselves. It is called in the Bible sowing to the Spirit, and those disturbed by the winds which deny character-development will not sow. (Gal. 6: 7-9). What is sowing to the Spirit? Sowing to the flesh is following those practices which the flesh encourages; and *"the works of the flesh are manifest"*. One sows in the mind and reaps in the actions; and if the flesh continues to practise thus, another harvest results—*"they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God"*. And so, sowing to the Spirit means sowing those graces which the Spirit prompts. Again the sowing is in the mind, and again there are two crops—fruitage in this life and then life everlasting. Keep on this sowing; *"be not weary in (this) well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not"*. Remember, there are two crops from this sowing—the fruit of the Spirit now, and in the resurrection life everlasting. There was every encouragement to the Galatian brethren to be not weary in well-doing and disregard the winds and clouds. Similar reasoning is made by the apostle in Rom. 6: 19-23—the yielding of oneself to uncleanness leads to still further iniquity with death as result, and the yielding of our members to righteousness leads to holiness and the end everlasting life.

But in this sowing to the Spirit, what must we sow? The obvious answer (that we sow seed) must be stressed. Something with life in it! And seed is useless unless it be sowed. The seed is clearly the words of life which the Holy Spirit has given to us. Sow the word in hearts and heads—there will be fruitage. Don't leave the seed in the packet! Millions have Bibles, but leave the words unopened and unsown. In another way of reasoning we must sow that which we hope to reap. If we want a crop of turnips we sow turnip seed—no other seed will do. And so, if we desire the fruitage of love, joy, peace, etc., we must sow these graces, or no crop will result. Some may say: "We need more brotherly love"—and to them the answer is, *sow it*. But if we observe the clouds (irrespective of who caused the clouds) no sowing will be done, and we shall still be expecting more brotherly love from others, but have done nothing to encourage it. *Sow these graces in our own hearts and scatter where we can—there will be a crop*

even now, and life everlasting awaits us.

Some have been to meetings where the subject for discussion was not to their liking; few joined in, and the meeting lacked warmth. Feeling uncomfortable, they have not sown the truth, and therefore have not reaped its fruitage. But unconsciously the seeds of discontent have been sown in their hearts, and no one has profited. Some have said: "I went to the meeting and did not get a crumb". To them the answer is: "If you had brought some bread all would have had a crumb".

Let us sow the seed of truth, for this seed is alive, and must therefore reach fruition. Sow it in our own hearts and sow it in the meeting. The onus is on us to sow. It must yield because it is alive. And then we shall be able to speak as did Paul: *"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase"*. Speak the words of truth in the meeting, another will add further comments, and God will give the increase; and so will be found that true unity—*"He that planteth and he that watereth are one"*.

We may pick grains of sand which look like seed, yet they will give no crop; but from life-bearing seed as small as mustard large plants will grow. And we are amazed that so much results from such small seed, and we realise that God has given the increase. The growth from seed to plant is ever a mystery to man, as our Lord said in Mark 4: 26-28. So, if we sow the seeds of truth in our own hearts it cannot fail to grow, though we know not how. Then let us sow. (In the parable of the sower the grain was broadcast, not sown in selected ground. From which it may be reasoned that in the broadcasting of the gospel there is more hope of crop than in ground of our own choosing). Do not expect fruition immediately. "We cannot eat the fruit while the tree is in flower", said Disraeli. Patience will be needed, but there will be a crop, for it will follow the Divine rule—*"first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear"*. It will need no super-gardening to make it grow, for the seed has life in it. The main act of character-development is seed-sowing—God will give the increase. Does not the Bible speak to us of growth, rather than building, as its picture of character-development? Building is the assembling of stones and wood ready cut; and differing buildings may be built with the very same material. No such difference results from growth of the same seed. If we each sow to the Spirit, we shall each reap the same crop, for character will

grow, we know not how, and each will reap the same crop in the resurrection—life everlasting.

By the gift to each of the Church of the Holy Spirit, God Himself begins the sowing. It is given to every man to profit withal. This gift we could not obtain by any other means; and it is the means by which we become members of the Body of Christ, for God sets the members everyone of them in the Body as it has pleased Him. He then starts the life of character growth by his gift. *Let it grow! "Be filled with the Spirit; pray for the Spirit; quench not the Spirit";* and act so that the prayer will be answered. One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to lead us into all truth; and thus it follows that we must go and dwell in those conditions where the sown seed may prosper. We must go where the words of life are to be found, for that is the seed. We must seek the fellowship of those who also have the seeds of truth; there, as it were, to exchange seeds or grains of truth; there to follow up the sown seed by watering. And, acting on the Bible paradox that he who would save his life shall lose it, we shall sow in our own hearts by giving away the seed to our fellows. He who gives it away keeps it, for, by dispensing, it becomes impressed upon his own heart, and so he keeps it. Do not hoard it; do not leave the seed in the packet; give it away! Plant it; someone else will water it, and God will give the increase. We sow in fellowship; but some, regarding the winds, will think it cosier by the fire side, and will stay at home. Not sowing, they will not reap, except that by isolating themselves they sow dissatisfaction in their own hearts and will reap its crop. And some cautious ones may say: "I am not sure that if I sow there will

be fruitage", or, "I will sow a little, and if it flourishes I will sow more". To such the words of 2 Cor. 9. 6 seem appropriate. We shall reap as we sow—if sparingly, so we shall reap; and if bountifully, so shall we reap. The onus is on us to sow; God will give the increase.

We sometimes regard the winds even in fellowship, saying to ourselves: "I will not bring up such and such a topic", but someone is the loser, for fellowship includes the free discussion of all Bible questions. And, on the basis that the best meetings are those where all contribute, remember the words of Paul: "That which every joint supplieth", for this will make increase of the body.

Recall the error of the Galatian brethren. According to Paul, they started to sow to the Spirit, but reverted to the bondage of the flesh. After receiving the gospel of grace, they were returning to "another" gospel. "*Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*" Paul was disturbed by their change for their groundwork of justification was leaving them, and they were thinking of returning to the Law from which they had been freed in Christ. And how could they reap the fruitage of love, joy, etc., if they were sowing to the flesh? A little leaven was leavening the whole lump, for they were sowing the wrong seed. May it not be said of us: "*Ye did run well, who did hinder?*". Hence the exhortation of Gal. 6. 7-9. "In due season we shall reap" does not mean that sometime, somehow, we shall reap, for the principle of growth is that fruition comes at its due season. In due season means the season when it is due. And in the season of God's appointing, "that day", we shall reap the eternal crop—if we faint not—if we regard not the winds.

### SIMON THE CANAANITE

Simon Zelotes the Apostle (Luke 6. 15; Acts 1. 13), one of the Twelve, is the same as "Simon the Canaanite" in Matt. 10. 4 and Mark 3. 18, but he was a Jew, not a Canaanite. "Zelotes" is the word transliterated into English as "Zealot". The Zealots were members of a political party sworn to overthrow the Roman power by violent means; Simon must have been associated with this group before his call to discipleship, hence the

name. The expression "Canaanite" in the other two texts is an error; the word in Greek is *Kananites*, mistranslated Canaanite. It denotes an inhabitant of Cana the Galilean village. It could also be a transliteration of the Hebrew *ginah*, meaning "zealous", so bringing the word in line with the first two texts. Cana was near Nazareth and there is nothing unlikely in Jesus having chosen one of his twelve disciples from that village.

The sweetest and most inspiring thought that a Christian can hold in his heart as he faces life's responsibilities is that God knows the sincerity of his heart devotions. To be able to look up into the face of God and confess

amid all the fluctuating experiences of one's life, "Thou knowest that I love Thee" is to know a refuge and a place of rest for every glad and every troubled hour in life.

## THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

### 3. Visions and Dreams

A series of notes on the principles underlying prophetic interpretation

The greatest prophecies have been given through visions and dreams. We do not know how many of the Millennial descriptions of Isaiah and others owe their vividness of detail to this fact, but we do know that such prophecies stand out the more clearly, and linger longest in the memory. It may be that God chose the sense of sight rather than that of sound as His first medium of communication with man, and spoke to "holy men of old" in vision rather than by sound. The oldest words for "prophet", *roeh* and *chozeh*, seem to indicate this, for they both mean *one who sees*, and are often translated *seer*. After about 1000 B.C., however, the word *nabi*, meaning one who speaks ecstatically and fervently, began to supplant the older words, and it may well be that this change of word indicates a development in the status of the prophets, that whereas at the first they could do no more than relate the visions that they had seen, the later prophets could, and did, *explain* their visions in part to the people and perhaps tell them in glowing terms of those glories of the Divine Plan which they had been permitted to see. Such a conclusion is in harmony with the view that Divine Truth progressively unfolds as century succeeds century. An interesting note in this connection is found in 1 Sam. 9. 9, where the narrator, explaining Saul's servant's reference to the "man of God", says, "*Beforetime* in Israel when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a prophet (*nabi*) was beforetime called a Seer" (*Roeh*). This verse is evidently an editorial note added to the account at some later date to explain the change of term to a generation that was not familiar with the more primitive meaning.

It is noteworthy that visions and dreams were not used to convey knowledge of God's future plans to men until the time of Isaiah. From then to that of John the Revelator, a period of eight hundred years, they formed the principal means of prophetic revelation. It is probable that visions as such go right back to the time of Eden; the sight of the Cherubim with the flaming sword, stationed at the entrance to Eden to keep the way of the Tree of Life (Gen. 3. 24) must have been a vision, for the cherubim, symbolic four-headed and six-winged creatures, have no exist-

ence in reality. Then Moses saw the vision of God on the Mount, and talked with Him, at the time when the Law was written there by the finger of God (Exod. 31. 18). Moses, of course, was that finger, for the Law proved to be well and solidly engraven on stone slabs, and human instrumentality of some kind manifestly was employed.

Apart from the problematical case of Balaam (Num. 24. 16) there is no instance of "Kingdom prophecy" by vision or dream prior to the time of Isaiah. This is in keeping with the fact that Israel's own understanding of the Messianic Kingdom began to assume definite shape in Isaiah's day; even although David sang about it in his Psalms the idea was not clearly formulated in Israel at that time. It required the revelations of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel positively to define the nature of that Kingdom, and appropriately enough these four, together with Zechariah, who lived last of the five, were those to whom the greatest and most detailed of the Messianic visions were granted.

Isaiah's first vision was that of the Lord in His Temple (Isa. 6. 1). Although he does not explicitly state which of his further revelations were given by vision the nature of some of them, particularly chaps. 13, 21, 35 and 63, is such as to leave little room for doubt that they are descriptions of scenes that he did actually see. In some cases the visual impression was merely a symbolic picture, symbolising to his mind the reality that was intended. For example, in chap. 21 he perceived the dreaded *simoom*, a cyclonic wind, sweeping up from the Persian Gulf, to destroy the land, followed by a motley procession of chariots drawn by ill-assorted beasts of burden making all haste to get away, and he knew this to be symbolic of the fall of Babylon and the overrunning of the country by Cyrus of Persia; in chaps. 44 and 45 he associates this victory of Cyrus with the assuming of regal power by the destined "Servant of Jehovah", the Lord Jesus Christ in His Millennial Kingdom, and so makes chap. 21 a prophecy of that also. In chap. 35, however, he describes a scene that will certainly be literally fulfilled in the Millennial Age, and like Paul in after days (2 Cor. 12. 2) he might well have viewed in vision an actual scene of earth, three millenniums before that scene can be enacted in

reality.

Jeremiah saw an almond twig suddenly and miraculously burst into blossom, and then a boiling cauldron overturned so that its seething contents were precipitated all over the ground (Jer. 1. 11-14). Those symbols told him of the coming fulfilment of Divine promise, but that there must first be a visitation in judgment at the hand of the Chaldeans, spreading death and destruction over the land. A later vision showed him two baskets of figs, symbolic of his own nation, one basket containing good figs and the other, bad ones, telling him of the two sections into which that nation had divided itself, the one part heeding the Divine word and resting quietly in Babylon, the other, chafing under God's judgment and looking still to Egypt for salvation (Jer. 24. 1-10). The prophecy represented by this vision was fulfilled to the letter eighteen years later, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple and brought the national existence of Judea to an end.

Twelve years after Jeremiah had seen his blossoming almond rod, Ezekiel, far away in Babylonia, beheld a series of visions which for sheer grandeur have no equal in the Old Testament. Like his predecessor Isaiah, he saw first of all a vision of the majesty of God, riding on the heavens, His throne supported by the cherubim (Ezek. 1). Later on he received visions relating to events imminent in his own time, a roll of a book containing an intimation of the coming downfall of Jerusalem (chaps. 2-7), a vision of the Temple with its idolatrous worship and the destruction of both city and Temple at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers (chaps. 8-11); all this some twelve years before the events took place. Later in his ministry he saw the final re-gathering of Israel (the valley of dry bones), their last trial of faith (the onslaught of Gog), and the Millennial reign, under symbol of a new Temple and city, chapters 37-48 of his prophecy comprising a detailed symbolic account of history from the Jewish viewpoint extending from their national awakening at the end of the Gospel Age to the final establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth, a series of events that in Ezekiel's day was still something like twenty-five centuries future.

The visions and dreams of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar belong to this same period, but whereas Ezekiel viewed the Divine Plan from heaven's standpoint, Daniel saw these things from the standpoint of an observer upon earth. Ezekiel was a priest, Daniel a statesman.

Ezekiel saw his visions on the plains of Tel-Abib, the Jewish colony in southern Babylonia; Daniel saw his in the main at Babylon, the centre of the Gentile power. The symbols in which the visions of the Book of Daniel were expressed were in keeping with this environment, expressive of the might of material things; a great image, a great tree, powerful wild beasts, and a heavenly Judge come down to make an end to them all. And here is a case where a completely unregenerate man is used as the vehicle of Divine revelation. Nebuchadnezzar was not a worshipper of God, yet his two dreams were as strictly and accurately prophetic as were Daniel's, although it was necessary for Daniel, the God-directed man, to explain them. At the same time it must be remembered that Nebuchadnezzar was a deeply religious man and served his gods with an ardour worthy of a better cause. Like Saul of Tarsus, he verily thought he did God service. Is it possible that this piety of his, even although applied to unworthy objects, did make it possible for the prophetic vision to come to him where it could not come to less worthy men?

The Book of Daniel has often been called the "Revelation" of the Old Testament, but the description is probably more true of the Book of Zechariah. The visions of this, the Restoration prophet, embrace a greater span of time and a wider range of symbols than any other of the Old Testament prophecies, commencing with the Captivities of Israel and the Restoration, going on to the history of the Church, merging into the coming to power of the Ancient Worthies and concluding with the establishment of the Kingdom. The imagery of Zechariah is more like that of John the Revelator than is that of any other prophet.

Now the significant thing about all these prophetic visions and dreams is that the later prophets saw more deeply, farther into the future, and clothed their prophecies in more grandly symbolic language, than did the earlier ones. There seems to be a kind of progressive revelation at work which enabled the later prophets to see more clearly into the mysteries of the spiritual world. Amos and Nahum, and to some extent Isaiah and Jeremiah, spoke only of things that were fulfilled within a century or so of their own time; and the visions were largely of mundane things, the city of Nineveh, the everyday implements of husbandry, the armies of Babylon, and so on. The later visions of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and all those of Daniel, reach farther forward,

to the threshold of the Millennial Kingdom, and employ symbols in which the powers of heaven begin to be introduced—the stone cut out without hands, the Ancient of Days come down to judgment, the new covenant written in men's hearts, and the new heavens and new earth. Ezekiel and Zechariah, and John the Revelator, the last of the "vision" prophets, take their predictions into or to the end of the Millennial Age and use symbols which only the spiritually minded can hope to understand; the Temple and the River of Life, the High Priest raised to royal power, the olive trees and golden candlesticks, the Lamb on Mount Zion and the marriage of the Lamb. In all of this there seems to be a gradual but a definite leading away from the plain unvarnished literal acceptance of what is seen in the vision to its spiritual interpretation along lines of accepted symbolism. And this in its turn is but another aspect of our turning away from that which the natural eye perceives to that which is discerned spiritually, by the mental sight, that we might thus be instructed in the things of God.

To us, then, the visions and dreams of the prophets should be looked at in their structure as akin to our own dreams, strange composite pictures, flickering across the consciousness,

not necessarily to be taken as literal images of the things with which they deal, but as representations in which every symbol has a meaning alluding back to some event or thing in the Old Testament or in the world of the Old Testament. Thus it is that only those who are thoroughly conversant with that rich storehouse which is God's word can hope to understand and interpret prophecy.

How do the visions come? By what power are these symbolic foreviews of events that have not yet happened produced upon the screen of the human mind? And, once produced, is there no power that can divert the current of events so that the predicted happening never materialises in fact? And if there is no such power, and the event must follow the prophecy as surely as night follows day, and if the lives and destinies of men are bound up in such prophecies—as indeed they are—and there is no escape from the fulfilment predicted, it may be, long ages before those men were born, what becomes of the boasted free-will of the individual? The answers to such questions, insofar as there can be answers in the present limited state of our knowledge, must form the subject of a separate article.

(To be continued)

## THE WORD OF TRUTH

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For the Word of God is quick, and

powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Lord said "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it: For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, for it will surely come, it will not tarry." Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light upon my path. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day!

2 Tim. 3. 16-17; Psa. 19. 7-10; 2 Pet. 1. 19; Heb. 2. 1; Heb. 4. 12; Hab. 2. 2-3; Psa. 119.

Life is too short to spend in bickering and strife; love is too sacred to be for ever lacerated and torn by the ugly briars of sharp

temper. Surely we ought to be patient with others since God has to show every day such infinite patience towards us.

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**BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES**
**EXODUS**

 Part 12 Road to Sinai Exod. 15. 22 - 16. 3
 

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The story of the Exodus begins in Egypt and ends at Mount Sinai. After that it becomes the story of the wanderings. The people of Israel were something like seven or eight weeks accomplishing the journey to Sinai, and nearly three of these had expired before they got across the Red Sea. It was after the crossing that the journey began in earnest. Nearly two hundred miles of rugged mountain territory lay between them and the sacred mountain to which Moses proposed to bring them—for Sinai was a holy mountain to all Semitic peoples long before Moses made it the Mountain of the Law. Without doubt the Hebrew leader was guided by God in bringing the people to this mountain in the south of the Sinaitic land, far indeed from Canaan their goal. The apparently inexplicable action of Moses in thus taking Israel into the wilderness instead of straight along the high road into Canaan is understandable when it is seen that Mount Sinai was the objective. There was no more fitting place in all the ancient world where the Law could be given with the solemnity it demanded, and the unorganised collection of tribes that was Israel be welded together into a nation.

So about seventeen days after the fateful Passover night when Israel received Pharaoh's mandate to go, and on the morning after that exultant service of thanksgiving which marked their momentous crossing of the Red Sea, Moses gave the word to march. Immediately all was activity, messengers speeding through the vast camp which stretched probably six or seven miles along the seashore, men rounding up their flocks and cattle, women packing tents and household goods, until at last the whole vast assembly began to get on the move and head southward into the unknown.

*"So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water."* (ch. 15. 22). This verse marks the commencement of the journey. The word "Shur" means "wall" and the wilderness of Shur was so named because it denoted the rather barren stretch of land lying between the Red Sea and the lofty wall-like escarpment of Central Sinai. This tremendous plateau rises up in a long, sheer

precipice running for many miles roughly parallel to the sea at a distance of fifteen to twenty miles back from the coast. Over this stony plain the hosts of Israel made their way with the sea on their right hand and the mountains on their left. At first the going would be tolerably good—they were at this stage of their journey following the main route to the Egyptian copper mines at Serabit-al-Khadim, but after passing the oasis near Suez nowadays called Ain Musa, the "wells of Moses", there lay before them a forty mile stretch where water was not to be had. Supplies for so vast a host would quickly run out, and so it was that they went three days' journey finding none. *"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter . . . and the people murmured against Moses"* (ch. 15. 23-24).

Forty miles south of Ain Musa the barrenness of the land is interrupted by an oasis with pools and springs of water, shown on the maps as Ain Huwarah. The Arabs call it Mara, which in Arabic means bitter. The water is bitter, so bitter as to be virtually undrinkable; in passing through the rocks and ground of this district it becomes heavily impregnated with carbonate of soda and in consequence this oasis has the unenviable reputation of being the worst in the Peninsula. This is the place to which the host came, rejoicing at the sight of the clear pools and streams after their three days in the burning heat—and then found they could not drink of the water!

At once the miracle of the Red Sea crossing was forgotten and the people complained to Moses. The result was the first of four wonderful happenings in which Divine intervention was manifest, all concerned with the provision of physical sustenance—the sweetening of the waters at Marah, the sending of the quails for meat, the provision of manna for bread, and the production of water from the rock at Rephidim. The extent to which any of these events can be attributed to natural causes is a matter for investigation and enquiry, but there is no doubt that each one was made the occasion of a needed lesson in the power of God to preserve and sustain those who are prepared to trust Him and exercise faith. In this case the narrative tells

how God shewed Moses a tree which, when cast into the water, made it sweet, so that the host was satisfied. Commentators have searched natural history books without success to find details of a tree having this marvellous property; some have gone so far as to assert that the Arabs of Sinai know of a tree that will make brackish water fresh but there is really no solid foundation for such statement. Josephus tried to be helpful by suggesting that Moses used a long pole to stir up the bottom of the well, thus releasing fresher water, but this hypothesis is no better than the other. The fact so often ignored is that this was not a question of purifying a single well to draw water for a mere handful of people; there were the needs of nearly three million persons and all their cattle to be met and this demands that only a copious river or succession of capacious pools could satisfy the needs of the case. Huwarah to-day is only a trickle of a stream, but like most parts of Sinai three thousand years ago the water supply then was much more abundant. If Moses did purify the water by some physical action of his own he must have engaged himself to a herculean task.

This direction to cast a certain tree into the water is singularly like two incidents in the life of Elisha, recorded in 2 Kings 2 and 4. In one case the water of a spring serving the needs of Jericho had become brackish and unfit to drink. Elisha cast salt into the spring and declared that God had healed the waters; it was even so! In the other instance a mess of pottage in process of cooking was found to contain poisonous fruit; it was rendered wholesome by a ceremonial casting in of meal. In both accounts the healing is said to have been by the exercise of Divine power, a miracle, and the outward action was only a symbol of faith that God would so act. Remembering that Moses, only a few days earlier, had performed a similar symbolic act by stretching his rod over the Red Sea with the consequence that the sea parted and allowed Israel to cross, it is reasonable to think that his casting of a tree into the bitter waters of Marah was a similar act and indicated Moses' avowed faith that God could, and would, intervene to heal the waters, as in fact He did. The actual agent He used to heal the waters is not really material, but it could well have been what men would call a purely natural happening. A cloud-burst up in the mountains, sending a torrent of fresh rainwater rushing down the "wady" or river-valley to the sea through Marah, would do it.

For a few days the water would be all surface water, and fresh, reverting to its habitual bitterness when again the stream was supplied only by water which had percolated through the ground and absorbed its customary amount of carbonate of soda. Such cloud-bursts are even now quite common in Sinai—travellers tell of seeing a wall of water eight or ten feet high advancing down a valley at a furious rate, sweeping everything before it. Israel's discontent at the bitter water and their manifest lack of faith may have been followed almost at once by much more water than they wanted, to their extreme discomfort.

By this, or some similar means, the physical needs of the host were satisfied. The incident was made the occasion of an injunction to faith and confidence in God. At Marah, the narrative says, Moses "*made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them*". They were to hearken to the voice of God, and do that which is right in His sight, and keep all His statutes, and God would preserve them from all the troubles which they had seen inflicted upon the Egyptians. They listened, and probably assented to the exhortation, and were profoundly impressed by, as well as grateful for, the miracle—and within a week were murmuring against Moses again.

From Marah eleven miles and a day's journeying brought them to Elim, "*where were twelve wells of water and three-score and ten palm trees*" (ch. 15. 27). The twelve and seventy are not intended to be taken literally; they are expressions indicating repletion. There were so many springs and pools, so many trees, that there was plenty for everybody. Elim is almost certainly the modern Wady Gharandel, even now one of the greenest and most fertile spots in mainly barren Sinai. In Moses' time the whole area was one of clear streams rushing down to the sea, with rolling hills well wooded and wide meadows affording ample pasturage for flocks and herds. The period spent encamped at Elim must have been a very pleasant one and when after about four days the word was given to pack up and take the road again the people would have been feeling cheerful and confident.

At this point the road to the copper mines turned inland, ascending the mountains. Moses chose to leave that road and take instead a trackless route which led across wide rivers and thick forests back to the shore of the Red Sea. There is in fact a certain amount

of difference among investigators as to the precise route of the Exodus from here to Mount Sinai. The obvious advantage of continuing to follow the road, which would afford an almost direct, well-trodden way to within a few miles of the holy mountain, has led some to fit the references in chap. 16 to this route. The alternative, over untrodden country, involved a long detour under extremely arduous conditions and it has been claimed that no man in his senses would have considered trying to lead several million people on such a pilgrimage when an easier way existed. The answer to all this—and it is a very important answer—is that the whole story of the Exodus shows the way Moses led the host was deliberately chosen to be as difficult and exacting as possible. The journey to the Promised Land was not intended to be easy; the hazards and obstacles met with on the way were ordered and directed by an overruling Providence to the end that the nation which ultimately was to emerge from this fiery crucible of affliction should be strong, hardy, tested in the fire, and found worthy as well as able to become the people of God. It may not be altogether fanciful to suggest that the amazing virility and endurance displayed by the people of Israel through the centuries, the fact of their continued survival in face of so many attempts to destroy them, may have its roots in the Spartan experiences their ancestors endured during those forty years in Sinai.

Modern investigation—including detailed prospecting by experienced members of the British Ordnance Survey toward the end of last century—has fairly conclusively established the route taken by the Israelites. From Elim they made their way to the shores of the Red Sea—we are indebted to Num. 33. 10 for this information—where they encamped again, probably for three or four days. Right ahead of them rose the forbidding mountains of Ras Kenimeh, stretching from the far interior to a lofty headland jutting into the sea. Round the base of that frowning cliff there is just room for travellers to pass. These hosts of men, women and cattle converged on the stony shore from the wooded valleys and green meadows, shaping themselves into a long procession which made its way between the beetling cliffs on the left hand and the blue sea on the right. Some of them must have perceived the just visible coast of Egypt on the other side, the Egypt from which they were now escaped. Their water bags were full, they had plenty of food, the trees gave

pleasant shelter from the tropical sun, they were spending at least two days in quietness at each camping place, and they were called upon to travel only about twelve miles at a time, easily accomplished in one day. Marah was forgotten, they had bread and water to the full, the Promised Land was before them, and all was well.

And only Moses knew that upon the other side of the headland of Ras Kenimeh there awaited them the terror and the agony of the Wilderness of Sin!

Chapter 16 verse 1 reads "*And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt*".

The Wilderness of Sin—now known as the Plain of El Markha—is a flat, sterile waste bordering the sea and backed by high mountain ranges. There was no alternative way; Israel had to traverse this desert from end to end. Captain Palmer, of the Ordnance Survey team which explored the route, describes it as "*a desolate expanse of flints, gravel and sand, nearly destitute of vegetation, broken from time to time by equally desolate wadies*" (dry water courses) "*opening upon it from the interior. There is hardly any more dismal tract in the whole Peninsula. Even in winter the heat is indescribable during the day . . . From about nine to eleven in the morning travel is almost intolerable, especially to the newcomer. Heat is everywhere present, seen as well as felt. The waters of the gulf*" (the Red Sea) "*beautiful in colour, deep azure to the most delicate blue, are mirror-like, almost motionless, breaking on the beach in a sluggish, quiet ripple. The sky, also beautifully blue, is clear, hot and without a cloud; the soil of the desert is baked and glowing.*" Surrounded on three sides by mountains, and flanked on the fourth by the sea, with no streams and no vegetation, this desert formed a giant sun-trap; solar rays poured upon it continuously, the rocks and ground shimmered with reflected heat, nowhere was there any shade and nowhere was there any food or water. The sharp flinty fragments which form the surface of the ground cut the travellers' sandals and their feet to pieces; their waggons laboured heavily in the soft sand and when they stuck fast the beasts of burden had not the strength to pull them clear. Only at night would there be a slight respite. With the setting of the sun a breeze comes in from the

sea consequent upon the hot air over the baked ground rising and creating a partial vacuum; this breeze is laden with moisture which tempers the heat and deposits a heavy dew. The dew is speedily evaporated when the sun rises next morning but in the meantime it can be collected and constitutes the only means of obtaining water in this desert. It is significant in this connection that the Israelites suffered from hunger in this wilderness rather than from thirst; they probably collected the dew and made it suffice for their needs. The manna was first given here and is said to have come down with the dew and to have disappeared "*when the sun waxed hot*".

Something like a fortnight was spent in these excruciating conditions. Food supplies ran short; once again the people's faith failed them and they began to look back with longing to the life they led in Egypt, where despite their servile condition they do seem at least to have always had plenty to eat. Now they saw nothing before them but starvation in this place of burning heat. "*Ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger*" (ch. 16. 3). The plagues on the Egyptians, the Red Sea crossing, the healing of the bitter waters, all of these things together were insufficient to persuade them that God would certainly preserve according to His promise. Before con-

demning them out of hand it may be well to consider the situation. Stranded in the midst of an apparently endless desert, helpless in the intense heat of the tropical sun, food all gone and death staring them in the face, the rosy prospect of a land flowing with milk and honey must have seemed no more than a mirage and in their disappointment and despair it was perhaps not to be wondered at that the latent thought found expression in words: "we would be better off back in Egypt".

But man's extremity is God's opportunity. Another striking demonstration of Divine power was about to be afforded them. The sun slowly sank to its rest and the seemingly well-nigh endless afternoon gave place to evening. As the night breeze began to blow off the sea the quails came. Host upon host, they came on, myriads of small bodies, flying in from the African coast, flying low with weariness, covering all the camp so that every man could catch his fill, and eat, and be satisfied. And in the morning, when men arose, there lay the manna, the Divine bread of heaven. Once again in history the power of the Unseen had been exerted in the world of the Seen, and that sterile desert by the shores of the Red Sea became a schoolroom for the further instruction of Israel in the wonderful ways of God.

(To be continued)

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## A FAMILIAR HYMN

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*"There were ninety and nine that safely lay  
In the shelter of the fold  
But one was out on the hills away  
Far off from the gates of gold  
Away on the mountains wild and bare  
Away from the tender Shepherd's care."*

The words are familiar to many Christians; but the story behind them is not well known. It was the year 1851. Elizabeth Clephane, a Scottish girl of twenty-one, was stricken with grief at the news of her ne'er-do-well brother's death after a drunken carousal in Canada. At that time it was the general belief that such an one was hopelessly lost. Elizabeth accepted the belief of her times but her heart told her that if she so loved her prodigal brother, then her Saviour must love him in even greater degree. In the midst of her grief she penned the words of this hymn. Not thinking it to be of interest to others she kept it locked away, a secret between her Lord and herself, but after her death it was discovered and sent to

a Scottish editor for publication.

Twenty-three years later, the two evangelists, Moody and Sankey, were waiting on the station platform at Glasgow. Ira Sankey had purchased a weekly newspaper in the hope of finding some news of his homeland, America. Disappointed in that expectation his eyes fell upon this little poem, published for the first time. Cutting it out, he placed it in his pocket book. At the end of that night's meeting, the commencement of a campaign in Scotland, Moody turned to his colleague and asked him to sing an appropriate solo. Somewhat troubled at having nothing immediately ready, Sankey bethought himself of the poem. Crossing to the piano, he improvised a tune as he sang. At the end of his singing a great sigh went up from the audience; some were in tears, and all present were so deeply moved that a great Scottish revival had its birth in that meeting.

## THE TERROR OF THE LORD

A much misunderstood text

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5. 11). What is this "terror" of the Lord?

Any idea that the Lord endeavours to frighten men into conversion by fear of the consequences of refusal is out of the question. A conversion motivated by fear is not worth anything to God; He will have His creatures' loyalty and allegiance by love and gratitude or not at all. In this respect some of the old-time revivalists who tried to scare men into repentance by lurid descriptions of the fate awaiting the unregenerate were, however sincerely, grievously in error. The text must be understood in relation to St. Paul's argument and in harmony with the known purpose and character of God.

The main theme of 2 Cor. 5 is that a spiritual body, adapted to the conditions of life in another world, a "house eternal in the heavens", is waiting for the believer after the termination of this life, and that this is an object of keenest anticipation to the Christian. Nevertheless we are content in this present life, labouring, whether absent from the Lord or present with Him, to be acceptable in His sight, knowing that we must ultimately appear before the *Bema*, the place of judgment where our Lord will review the life's work of each believer and give His verdict. It is in the knowledge of the solemnity and majesty of that "Last Assize", says St. Paul, that we "persuade men"—conduct our missionary work.

The word "terror" in the text is *phobos* which is generally used for fear or terror in the N.T. According to Thayer the word has two main significations, (1) Fear, dread or terror in a subjective sense (2) Reverence or respect for rank, authority or dignity. It is easy to understand how the second meaning was derived from the first in an age when respect for authority normally had an element of fear associated. The extent to which this element has to be given weight in any given instance must depend upon the nature of the case. When St. Paul says "*Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil*" (Rom. 13. 3) the usage is terror or fear in its

most elemental sense. When on the other hand he says "*Let the wife see that she reverence her husband*" (Eph. 5. 33—"Reverence" here is *phobos*) the idea of respect is uppermost and that of fear entirely absent. Likewise 1 Pet. 2. 18 "*Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear*" (i.e., with the respect due to their position). The injunction of Rom. 13. 7 "*Render to all their due, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*" can only be understood as referring to the normal respect due to civil authority. In just the same fashion the numerous references to the "fear of God" in the N.T. have to be understood as referring to that respect and reverence which is due to God on account of His high authority.

The N.E.B. rendering of the passage in question is perhaps the most helpful. "*We must all have our lives laid open before the tribunal of Christ, where each must receive what is due to him for his conduct in the body, good or bad. With this fear of the Lord before our eyes we address our appeal to men*". It is to be noted that the softer word "fear" is substituted for "terror" in the N.E.B., the R.S.V., the R.V. and all modern translations. "Terror" came into the A.V. from the Geneva Bible which was the only one of the pre-A.V. versions to adopt the word—some say due to the influence of John Knox, who had much to do with that version. It is probably true that "terror" was adopted in view of the close relation of the text to St. Paul's words regarding the "judgment seat of Christ", at a time when the Last Judgment was looked upon as a day of foreboding and dread. The character of the Most High is better understood to-day; so far from being a stern and merciless despot He is in reality an all-wise Creator, who will by no means loose His hold of any one of His creatures whilst any hope remains that such can be persuaded to turn from sin and serve the living God. It was with this kind of "godly fear" in his mind that the Apostle Paul went about his business of "persuading men".

It is completely foreign to the New Testament to split the Christian community into one speaker and a silent body of listeners.

(Prof. E. Schweizer)

If we but trusted our hearts instead of our eyes, we should know that God is the soul's circumstance, and His infinitude is its breathing-space.

**ON PRAYER**

Someone has remarked that as the sharpening of scythes in harvest time does not mean lost time and energy, so also time spent in prayer is not lost as respects the affairs of life. Unquestionably the best men and women in the world are those who pray, and pray regularly; who bow the knee as did Daniel. Unquestionably the moments thus taken from earthly affairs are well spent and bring more than commensurate blessings upon the worshipper. Unquestionably it is impossible to live a consecrated life in neglect of prayer.

What would Daniel have been without his praying time? How would his faith in God have persisted in that heathen land? How would his loyalty to principle have maintained itself in the midst of corruption had it not been for his communion with his maker? To the Christian this privilege is still further enhanced by a realisation that "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous," in whose all-prevailing name we may approach with courage, and obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need.

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